



THE QUEEN'S MESSENGER'S STORY.



# STORM-BOUND.

## INTRODUCTION.



It was absurd to call it a *table d'hôte*. We all know that a *table d'hôte* means several acres of table-cloth; a crowd of guests ranging from five-and-twenty to two-hundred-and-fifty in number; napkins folded into fan shapes and stuck into wine-glasses, corresponding in number with the guests; and a large staff of waiters to hand about the thin *potage*, the *truites*, the *kabel-jau*, the *consommé aux œufs*, the *reh-braten*, the *gigot*, the *kartoffel-salad*, and the other delicacies. I suppose one ought not to have expected any large number of people to be staying at Calais on Christmas-eve; but I confess that, when, in reply to the waiter's an-

nouncement that the *table d'hôte* was ready, I descended from my bedroom and found myself bowed towards a small round-table in the chimney-corner of the Hôtel Dessin, at which one other gentleman was seated, I was astonished. So, evidently, was the other gentleman. He said to Louis, the short stout waiter (Charles, the long thin waiter with the white hair and the *ailles de pigeon*, who looked old enough to have waited on Sterne, is long since dead), 'Is this the —?' and he pointed to the little table; and Louis, whose name is undoubtedly Ludwig, and his birthplace Strasburg, responded, '*Oui, m'sieu, zay le dable tot.*' So the other man and I looked at each other, and burst out laughing, and struck up an acquaintance immediately, sitting down at the table and ordering up a bottle of champagne and a bottle of claret, and doing as much justice as lay within us to the meal—which truth binds me to remark was too greasy to be English, and too nasty to be French, and

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was uncomfortable, bad, and dear. But we got through it somehow, and talked away pleasantly enough, until the howling of the wind outside—it had been blowing heavily during the afternoon, and half a gale seemed now to be raging—attracted our attention.

‘Tremendous stiff wind,’ said my comrade, pausing in the act of raising his glass to his lips.

‘And the snow, messieurs!’ said Louis, who was replenishing the stove.

‘Snow!’ repeated my comrade, putting down his glass—‘snow?’

‘Snow in great thick flakes, m’sieu!’

‘Did you intend crossing to-night?’ asked my new-found acquaintance, addressing me.

‘Of course I did,’ I replied; ‘it’s most important that I should be home to-morrow. Why, to-morrow’s Christmas-day!’

‘Ye-es,’ he said slowly; ‘it *is* a bore. Not as regards Christmas-day, of course; I’ve spent that festival in **many** odd places; I’m a Queen’s Messenger, don’t you know? and don’t **hold** very much to conventionalities; but—’

‘But I’m *not* a Queen’s Messenger!’ I said angrily; ‘and—and I want to get back; and—and do you mean to say I can’t?’

‘Not if it snows,’ he replied very calmly. ‘Boats here will do anything, go out in anything, blowing **great guns**, and all that kind of thing; but won’t go out in snow. Recollect Violet? Ostend boat—lost eight years ago in snowstorm. Tremendous fellows these captains, but won’t start in snow.’

‘Well, but,’ I said, ‘they *must*. It’s down in *Bradshaw*, and they carry the mails, and all that kind of thing. They *must*.’

‘Ye-es,’ he said again, very slowly; ‘I **know they must**; but they won’t. However, perhaps it’s nothing **after** all; **these fellows** make mountains of molehills. I’ll just light a pipe and **stroll down** towards the harbour, and find out all about it;’ and as he spoke he rose, took a heavy wrapper from the wall, lit his pipe, and left the room.

I ought to have gone with him—I know I ought; but I didn’t. He was no younger than I, perhaps, and I was as strong as he; but I was savage and lazy, and so I lit my cigar, and put my feet up in front of the stove, and made Louis bring me a ‘grog,’ and began to ponder over what brought me, a quiet easy-going Londoner, considerably on the wrong side of thirty years of age, at a continental hotel on a Christmas-eve.

The *Times* brought me. If it had not been my habit always to read the mysteries of the second column (with an hitherto unacknowledged feeling that I may some day see my own name amongst the ‘Heirs wanted,’ or the people who are requested to call on the legal firm in Gray’s-inn-square and hear something to their advantage), if it had not been my daily habit to study those mysteries, I might at this minute have been seated in my study in Ontario-square, smoking a peaceful



cigar, and defying all the winds that ever blew in Europe. But then what would have become of poor Minna? Ah, you don't know about poor Minna! I am advancing matters.

I wonder what the other people who read that interesting column thought when they saw—

*'If Kamphausen's Engländer is still alive, and has any kindly feeling left for Minna von T., he will, for Heaven's sake, go at once to La Petite Amélia, Pont d'Or, Calais, France, and ask for Madame Stüterheim.'*

I have no doubt most people thought it one of Herr Polasco's private-inquiry dodges; but I knew in a second what it meant, and grew red-hot from the crown of my head to the sole of my feet. I, principal clerk in the Tin-tax Office, Rutland House; senior churchwarden of St. Chasuble-cum-Cope; paterfamilias; chairman of the Penny Readings; treasurer of our coal-and-blanket fund; and holder of other respectable positions too numerous to mention—I was 'Kamphausen's Engländer' twenty years ago, at which precise period Minna von Triebenfeldt was the belle of Pappelsdorf-am-Rhein, where I was supposed to be studying. Kamphausen was my tutor; and as at that time I was the only Engländer, or Englishman, in the little town, I found that long before I was known personally to the young-lady coterie, they had been in the habit of distinguishing me by my bear-leader's name. I loved Minna, I need scarcely remark, for we were both sixteen at the time, nor need I add that she didn't love me in the least, but looked up to a Being considerably older and, at that time, larger. This Being was in the Uhlans, and had a uniform and a moustache, both of which I lacked. But though Minna did not love me, she pitied me; and when she married the Being, she accepted a blurred little photograph of me in a cheap blue-velvet frame, and gave me a chaste little kiss, and went away. And then I left Pappelsdorf, and entered the Tin-tax Office, and scarcely ever thought of her again.

This advertisement, then, was what Mr. Swiveller would have called 'a staggerer.' There is a Person connected with my domestic establishment who might, and who most probably would, have objected to any *revenant* to my *premiers amours* with Minna von T. or anybody else; and then the Christmas holidays were coming on, and the boys were coming home, and—La Petite Amélia be —, was there ever anything so vexing! But then Minna must be in a terrible fix, or she would never have appealed to me. Poor little Minna! I remembered what pretty brown hair she had. HAD! Yes, confound it! I had rather nice hair myself then, and now there's a vacant space the size of a crown-piece on the top of my head! I wondered whether she was much changed; she must be going on for forty now, and—*that* isn't the way to look at it! Here was a woman for whom you once cared (never mind whether you were boy or man—you *did* care for her!), in a strait, and appealing to you for help. You must go! I *did* go. There were important matters connected with the Tin-tax Office (as I explained domestically)



to be inquired into in Rutlandshire, for which purpose I started (as I did not explain domestically) by the night-mail for Calais. I found Pont d'Or, a white-faced miserable French village, with the never-failing turreted château, the never-failing blacksmith's shop, the never-failing green pond, the never-failing long poplar-fringed road. I found La Petite Amélia, a tumble-down villa, with a dank damp veranda, a desert garden, and a knocker-less and bell-less door. I found Madame Stüterheim—my Minna von T.—a hollow-eyed skeleton, dragged down by serious illness, which was made a thousand times worse by dire and griping poverty. I learnt afterwards, in course of time, that the Uhlan was dead, leaving his wife penniless; that she had gone to France and had gained a wretched subsistence by giving German lessons at Tours, at Cannes, at Paris, here and there, until at last she had heard of and gained a situation in an English school, to which she was proceeding when illness overtook her at Calais, and she had been forcibly taken possession of by a kindly Englishwoman, whom she had met in the train, to whom she told her story, and by whose advice the advertisement was inserted in the *Times*. She could do little, this Miss Hampton, for she was poor herself and made a bad fight against the world, leading a dreary life in La Petite Amélia for the sake of being near her dead sister's little boy, who was at school at Calais; but she tended little Minna as an elder sister might; and only when she saw the poor patient sinking for want of luxuries which she, alas, had not money to obtain, did she suggest the seeking for extraneous aid.

Well, I need not say that I did what I could; and it is surprising for what a very small amount of money the 'luxuries' of the poor can be purchased; and we procured the visits of a clever physician from Calais, and the services of the kindest and most selfless Sister of Charity; and we had in grapes and oranges and wine and firing; and every night when I took leave of Miss Hampton, and walked away the three dreary miles into Calais, to my bed at Dessin's, I felt that Madame Stüterheim was gradually, step by step, making good her ascent out of that Valley of the Shadow of Death in which I had found her; and by the fourth day her poor senses returned to her; and by the fifth she was enabled to take my hand between her poor withered transparent little *pattes*, and thank me in tones so like the trilling murmur which used to beguile me in the Seufzende Allée in Pappelsdorf, that I found myself repeating, with Claude Melnotte, 'Her voice again! how the old time comes o'er me!' But the present time was coming o'er me too; and when Christmas-eve arrived, I told Minna and Miss Hampton it was impossible that I could stay away from home any longer; and having made all arrangements for Minna's getting to England as soon as she was strong enough to bear the journey to her situation, I bade them farewell, shook hands with Miss Hampton, gave Minna another chaste salute (it was the second within twenty years, and I don't think I liked it so much as the first), and came in to Dessin's *table d'hôte*.



My companion at the banquet, Mr. Gerald Carew,—I had taken advantage of his absence to read his name emblazoned on his travelling-bag, perhaps a mean, but not an unnatural, proceeding,—came back very shortly, with his whiskers very much blown about, and his wrapper thickly coated with snow. ‘There’s no mistake about it,’ he said; ‘it’s blowing great guns, and the snow is blinding. No chance of our crossing to-night. We’d better make ourselves comfortable here!’ Perhaps I had the *vin triste*, and too much of it; perhaps it was the thought of not being at home on Christmas-day, the disappointment of the boys, and the anger of a Person; whatever it was that prompted me, I spoke out and said that I should do nothing of the kind; that I should go down to the pier; that the passengers from Paris would naturally insist on crossing; that the mails *must* go; and so forth. Mr. Carew laughed at my warmth; but when he found I was determined on starting, said he could not think of being left in that hotel with nothing but Sterne’s ghost for company, and he would go too. So we set out; Joseph the boots carrying our luggage across the deserted square, frowned upon by the ghostly towers of the cathedral, and of the old lighthouse, down the narrow street, underneath the water-gate which Hogarth drew (which of the four was it?), and so on to the harbour. As we tacked across to the *gare* of the railway, a tremendous gust of wind burst upon us, and we were obliged to support Joseph on either side, and to guide him, blinded with snow, to the station. Carew was right: the loungers at the station, half-maritime, half-locomotive, all predatory, laughed at the notion of the boat crossing; the other boat had not left Dover, and the captain of our vessel had calmly declared his intention of not starting. What would the passengers from Paris say? Replied to by a general *haussement* of *épaules*, and a suggestion that, so far as they were concerned, the *diable* might them *emporter*. In fact, when the passengers from Paris arrived, they were at once briefly made acquainted with the state of affairs, and told to do as they pleased. There was as yet no sign of the snow abating; so soon as it did, an attempt would be made to get out of harbour; the success of that attempt was by no means guaranteed, but with the cessation of the snow and with daylight it would be made. Meanwhile they could go to the hotels, if they chose to run the chance of being called up in time, or there was the *salle d’attente*, which was very much at their service. Thus far the agent of the boats, a bustling cheery man, who spoke as one knowing that his bed was all right close by. And then the passengers—they were not very numerous—looked round at each other, and one by one gradually filed off to the *salle d’attente*, or waiting-room.

It was a cheerful room, the lamps burnt brilliantly, the stove diffused a pleasant warmth, and the tumbler of hot brandy-and-water which an elderly and intelligent gentleman, with a big fur coat and a suspicion of dye on his whiskers, had brought in with him from the *buffet*, shed a

comforting influence. So comforting, that several other gentlemen—silently as Englishmen do most things, and as the poet tells us the Arabs folded their tents—‘stole away,’ and returned with similar tumblers. Some of the ladies huddled themselves into corners and pretended to go to sleep; but this the fur-coated gentleman would by no means permit, and established speedily a train of wine-glasses, large and of the claret pattern, but not calculated to shock the modesty of the female mind as would tumblers containing the same beverage. Then began a little conversation, mainly touching the weather,—talk which blazed, and dwindled down almost to monosyllables, and then blazed again, until at last my acquaintance of the *table d’hôte*, Mr. Gerald Carew, proposed first that we should drink ‘Merry Christmas’ as a toast; and secondly, that, as we were then thrown together for a certain number of hours, we should do our best to entertain each other, and that such among us as knew any interesting stories should tell them for the general good.

The first proposition was carried at once, and the toast was drunk, upstanding, with a ‘hurra!’ that frightened the sleeping loungers of the *gare* and the harbour, and sent them running to the windows of the *salle*; but the second was not responded to so quickly, and might have fallen through, had not the irrepressible man in the fur coat suggested that the way to work it would be for the proposer to tell the first story himself.

We all saw this in a minute, and though Mr. Carew modestly declined, we shouted ‘yes’ so strenuously, and settled ourselves down into listening attitudes so quickly, that he was compelled to give way, and at once to plunge thus into

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You must be content with a second-hand story. I'm ashamed to confess that scarce anything more dramatic than the common entries in a diary has befallen me since, ten years ago, I began to be bandied about desert countries and two continents by the racquets of the Foreign Office. Being a tennis-ball of flesh and blood—not of stuffed leather—I don't mean to deny that certain incidents of some personal interest have broken the routine of quick travel and lazy holiday. But, somehow, I don't often talk of these, even to myself; and I should be just as loth to parade them in any place

where two or three were gathered together, as before this fair company.

A *historiette* that I listened to last New-year's morning may serve to pay my score of the reckoning. It struck me as rather curious at the time, and I believe in the truth of every word, exactly as if it had happened to myself.

I had gone down to Tryston Towers for cover-shooting, as I have done for years past, if not on service, about Christmas-tide. I have never seen the dear old place in summer dress, often as I have visited there; but I can hardly fancy it grander, than when the gray stones stand out

clear against the back-ground of ivy and holly, laurel and yew. It is the very picture of a country-house, inside and out, to my mind; majestic enough to please a Magyar, and home-like enough for any yeoman. The scenery around has no pretence to beauty; yet it is not flat enough to be wearisome. In that county there is not one real hill, but abundance of rolling-ground; near Tryston especially, there is no lack of steep broken slopes, as strangers find out when they are posted low on one of the hanging woods, to stop the 'rocketers' sailing down wind from the upper beats. Such perfect cover-shooting, too! The game is not counted out there by myriads; I scarcely remember a day when the total ran into four figures; but you are never over-gunned; and may get your hundred head or so, comfortably, all to yourself, without jealousy or crowding. The men who shoot there habitually shoot straight as a rule, without maiming or massacring; but you are seldom oppressed by the presence of the *maestro*, who, after his first miss, looks round to see if every one shares his own surprise; accounts for the second by a lecture on planes and trajectories; and after the third, goes off home to put himself in physic.

Sir Harry Challoner exactly suits the house in which he was bred and born. Slightly stiff, perhaps, in his courtesy, and obstinate in his prejudices; but gentle and genial in his conservatism, and too wise or too indolent to stem the tide of innovation: only, as he glides down the stream he steers clear of fast eddies and treacherous whirlpools. Against one folly—though he never utters his protest aloud—his face is set like a flint-stone. The veriest Puritan could not dislike more heartily than he, those curious intimacies at which

Society laughs in its sleeve: he will not abide the *cavaliere servente* either in substance or name; and, with his good leave, no passion-flowers bud or blossom under Tryston roof-tree.

Nevertheless, congregate here matrons and maids, frisky enough for all innocent purposes; the dusky hours before dinner seem to pass quicker than in more racketing mansions; and no man has cause to hanker overmuch for his evening cigar. Lady Blanche Challoner, wife to Harcourt the heir, who plays *châtelaine* throughout the shooting season (Sir Harry is a widower of many years' standing), blends her social elements much as the baronet chooses his wines; so it is little wonder if no headaches or heartaches are carried away from Tryston Towers.

I've been rather long over my prelude; perhaps the frame will be better than the picture; but it's a question of cheating the clock after all.

On the night I speak of, when the new year was about an hour old, there were in the smoking-room at Tryston—besides myself—Harcourt Challoner, Frank Nethercote, and Sydney Thoroton.

We were all four of us old acquaintances; but Thoroton's cheek, when we saw him last, was pink and smooth; so his bronzed, bearded face looked to us like a stranger's now; he had just returned, after eight years' service in India, nominally on sick leave.

Nethercote was bred to the Bar; but before he had time to display an utter incapacity to the profession, a godfather's death left him at liberty to be as idle as he chose for the rest of his days. And he did so choose. I never saw indolence carried to such a pitch of science as in him. There is a steady consistency in his laziness that betrays one into respecting it like a virtue; and the laziness is in the grain, not on the



surface; he is not a great talker, but he talks well—sometimes too well for the peace of womankind, if all tales are true—without a particle of drawl or affectation; he is not the least helpless, either physically or morally—indeed, he shoots and rides better than most men—but all his sayings and doings are marked by the sedate self-possession that saves even dulness from being despicable. I rather insist on these points in Nethercote's character, because I want you to realise, that what happened to him cannot fairly be imputed to a nervous temperament or excitable imagination.

Our party had only mustered that day; so we naturally fell to discussing its component atoms. Amongst the chiefest of these was a certain Mrs. Selwyn; a seductive grass-widow, with evident dispositions to make the most of her furlough.

'Why don't you give your verdict, Frank?' Harcourt Challoner asked. 'You ought to be pretty well up in the language of the big black eyes, if studying them goes for anything. You'll make the baronet nervous, if you carry on often as you did to-night.'

'I wish my nerves were as good as your father's, at any time,' Nethercote said; 'and I've done nothing yet to ruffle them, I'll swear. I don't mean to deny that Mrs. Selwyn has superb eyes, or that she is able and willing to use them at fitting time and place; but, if she looked interested to-night, it was on purely philosophical grounds. There wasn't a word spoken, even bearing on the distinction of sexes. You don't believe me, I see.'

'Well, I do, after a fashion,' Thoroton retorted; 'but I don't think it betters the case much. I caught the words—"magnetism," and "a strange story"—as I passed. Not half a bad story, I daresay, if

one had heard it all: and Magnetism is not half a bad text, for such a sermon as you know how to preach, Frank. You're quite excused for monopolising the nicest thing in the house for a whole evening.'

There was a serio-comic bitterness in Thoroton's tone. He had tried to make running over that course himself before dinner; and perhaps was rather chafed at finding that the slaughter of two tigers in Colonel Selwyn's company did not give him the privileges of old acquaintanceship with that famous Shekarry's wife.

Nethercote looked at him with the quaint expression on his lip, that his friends called a smile, his enemies a sneer.

'I'm perpetually being surprised at the perspicacity of the world in general,' he said; 'and I really think dragoons see farther into millstones and have a keener scent for mares'-nests than their *pekin* neighbours. It's wonderful how service—particularly Indian service—sharpens the wit. Syd, I wish I could think your morals were equally improved. You're just the same as when we parted at Canterbury. You can't believe in the possibility of fixing a woman's attention on any topic save one. Now, it happens that I should be glad to discuss Animal Magnetism with the grandmother of any man here present, if the reverend person could throw any fresh light on the subject; and for the *Strange Story* Bulwer Lytton is accountable, not I. I could have told her rather a curious one, too, if I had chosen. I didn't, you see.'

Challoner's eyes opened, broad and blue, in astonishment.

'You don't mean to tell us, Frank,' he said very slowly, 'that you believe in Magnetism and Spirit-rapping, and all the rest of it? I'd as soon have thought of find-

ing you in the pulpit of a schism-shop.'

'My dear boy,' the other answered, 'there are some things one must believe in, unless one is a professional sceptic. Your father's claret, for instance; and Lady Bannerett's back-hair; and Original Sin, as exemplified in Sydney. It saves a lot of trouble, to accept partially what you can't explain away. That's just how it stands with me about Occult Science. There's a vast amount of vulgar *chicanerie* abroad no doubt; but the merest charlatans sometimes hover unintentionally on the verge of truth. Anyhow, it would be hard to persuade me that there's nothing in Magnetism.'

His face had grown graver and darker, like the face of one whose mind is busy, not with thought alone, but with some painful memory. We, who knew the man well, felt sure he had reason for his last word. Challoner, who knew him best, spoke, after a pause:

'Won't you tell us that story of yours? I don't feel half sleepy yet; and, however strange it may be, it won't affect my dreams.'

Nethercote shook his head, frowning.

'Don't boast, Harcourt. It brings bad luck; and there's luck in dreams, as in other things. There are some that, rather than dream again, I'd lie for as many minutes under a surgeon's knife. It is of such a one that you want me to tell you. Well, I will; I've seldom spoken of it—never, except to one person—since it befel me. If I seem egotistical or *vantard*, I can't help it. The after-part would be utter nonsense, unless certain premises were set forth. *Vamos!*

Some summers ago—not many either; but the date matters nothing—I was one of nine or ten who made the round of the German waters. It was a pleasant

pilgrimage. There was not even an imaginary invalid amongst us; so there was no talk of living by rule, nor any reason beyond whim for limiting our sojourn anywhere. The offerings of some of us on the green-clothed shrines were, perhaps, costly beyond our means; but you would only have 'spotted' the losers by marking who savoured most thoroughly their *Piper sec* at dinner. Sulky faces never showed themselves till our party broke up at Spa; some staying on there, some making for Paris, some homeward-bound straight by Ostend.

We were a very goodly company—I speak only of our womankind, of course—but two were fairer than their fellows. Know them as Maud and Margaret. For one was as wilful and wayward, and winning to boot, as Maud always is in fiction; and the other, as handsome and haughty as any queen that has worthily borne the name. A little too cold, at times, in voice and manner, or her rare beauty would have been even more beguiling. Now Maud, in her bitterest mood—and she was quickly angered as easily appeased—never froze; in her very petulance there was a subtle caress. Whether she was

Widow, or wife, or maid,  
Betrothed, betrayer, or betrayed,

concerns none of us—now. (He drew a long breath, strangely like a sigh.) Such as she was, I was her bond-slave for the time being; though, on some of those pleasant summer days, I own to having wavered occasionally in my fealty, and caught myself wondering, whether it was absolutely impossible for a man to serve two mistresses.

They were sworn allies, those two; at least, so the world said, and the world always knows best. At any rate, they reigned side by

side, over the same set, and dissembled their jealousies—if such existed—with the tact of queens born in the purple; very seldom indulging in the luxury of a sugared sarcasm, and fulfilling to the letter all the outward law of friendship. This pair were of the section going straight home by Ostend, and thus far only I travelled in their company; for I had business which kept me nearly a week longer abroad. Rather, it was poor Dick Hayston's business—my first-cousin, you know. He had been 'plunging' at every race-meeting throughout that summer, till, after Goodwood, he was fain to retire beyond seas to draw breath. A weary week I spent with him at Ostend, casting the lead into his sea of troubles, till at last we did find some sort of a bottom.

The first of the equinoctial gales was blowing right down Channel as we stood on the pier, knocking up a wicked cross-sea; and the sky to windward was black as ink. Though neither Maud nor Margaret were mere Solent sailors, I believe that either would have rejoiced in a real excuse for not going aboard till the morrow. But did you ever know a thoroughbred woman flinch, with her rival to the fore? And, truth to speak, there had been something sharper than the mild emulation of coquettes at work betwixt those two of late. So they smoothed their ruffled plumes in the lee of the paddle-box, like a couple of pretty passage-birds about to take wing, speaking scorn of the foul weather; and said 'good-bye.'—Margaret with a light laugh, and Maud with her peculiar wreathing of the lip, half-pout, half-smile.

The toughest traveller would have preferred a bed to a berth that night; yet, somehow, I felt dead out of luck, and cruelly ill-used, as I stood watching the toss-

ing lights till they faded into faint red gleams, and were swallowed up in the darkness. Dick Hayston was not to arrive from Brussels till the morrow, so I had to get through my evening as best I could; not a hard thing, either, you'd say, at Ostend, in mid-autumn. I went up to the Casino, and thence to the Cercle; met some old acquaintances at both places, and played *écarté* till midnight; winning, if I remember right, some thirty Napoleons. By the time I got back to my hotel, my spirits were at the dead-level again. I was still rather bored, but not a whit melancholy. If I thought of the folks at sea at all, I only thought that they would have a better passage than we had reckoned on; for the wind, after one fierce howling fit, had fallen wonderfully. On the whole, I never felt in better sleeping-form than when I lay down on a faultless bed, with my watch under my pillow. You'll see directly why I am so minute. Amongst the trinkets on my chain was one that had swung there only a few hours: it had come to me in this wise.

Months ago Maud had given me a locket, which both she and I were childish enough to look on as a sort of talisman. In one of our scrambles through Ardennes copsewood it had been caught in an oak-branch, and so sorely strained as to be utterly useless. The fashion and device were too cunning to be intrusted to ordinary workmen for repairs; so it was agreed that Maud should take it with her to England, that it might be fit for service again on my return. But I still chose to keep the—*the rose-leaf*, let us say—that the locket enclosed; and Maud searched her jewel-case for a temporary *reliquaire*.

There might have been a dozen similar trinkets in the drawer; and



it was I, not she, that pitched on a particular one as exactly fitted to the purpose—a sort of *porte-feuille* in dark-blue enamel and gold, with an intricate cipher on a raised medallion. But a mischievous light dawning on Maud's face made me ask rather hastily—who gave it her?

I don't think the carelessness of her answer was assumed.

'No one you ever heard of; no one of the slightest consequence—past, present, or future. They are a woman's initials.'

I generally believed her; she was too reckless—poor child!—for falsehood or reticence; besides, the time was too short for discussion; so I was fain to be content.

I lay down to sleep, as I told you, without a single definite inquietude. An hour or so later, this is what befel me in dream-land.

I was walking with Maud and Margaret through one of the chestnut woods that cover the upper slopes of the Apennines. I passed through just such a country years ago, when gold was at a discount, and bankers' bills at a premium, in Florence and Bologna, from the prevalence and audacity of brigandage. It was not altogether a pleasant stroll; for Maud seemed more provocative than usual, and Margaret's haughty temper less under control than it had been even of late. It was hard work keeping the peace between them: the problem would have been easy if a third power could have been eliminated, or a fourth brought in. We walked onwards and upwards, till pines began to succeed chestnuts and boulders of rock gleamed among the pines. And always the sky grew darker and darker, till we emerged on the barer crest of the hill, right in face of a low thunder-cloud ready to burst. Maud began to shiver in her own *frileuse* fashion; and, though Margaret's lip curled

in scorn of the other's terror, she seemed not sorry when a turn in the path brought us close to shelter.

A long massive building of light gray stone, streaked with green weather-stains, of the style common in Northern Italy some two centuries back; built along and under the steep ridge, so that entering on the upper side you found yourself at once on the main floor, with two stories beneath you. I have never set eyes on its counterpart; yet I am certain, as of my own existence, that it does exist somewhere.

We wandered on through a labyrinth of small chambers, bearing no signs of human habitation beyond mouldering rags of tapestry on the walls, and a few wrecks of antique furniture. At last we came into a large octagonal room, stone-floored and perfectly bare: there were three doors, besides the one by which we entered, all closed. The fierce rain was driving without, and the thunder-claps crashed nearer and nearer; but we all three drew towards a window and looked out. There's nothing so fascinating as a storm, if you are not too nervous to enjoy it.

I never heard a door creak or a lock jar; but when I turned at a rustle behind me, the room was nearly full of a wild-looking crowd, dressed in the peasant costume of the Upper Romagna. I was not well up in the *patois* of that country; but I seemed to understand every word they said, as they pressed round us, clamouring for the surrender of our money and valuables. If that had been all!—But I caught coarse phrases of exultation over the luck that had befallen them in more ways than mere booty, and coarser praises of my companions' beauty.

It has been my good or ill luck never to have been confronted with a worse peril than a big blind fence; so I cannot guess how, in

actual waking life, I should comport myself. Then, I not only felt exempt from personal fear, but violently tempted to be insolent and defiant. But I bethought me—'How would it fare with those other two, when I was down?' And that thought kept me quiet, and made me temporise. I said, 'Those other two.' But in that brief pause—I remember it so well—I found time to wonder how I could ever have doubted which of them was to me the nearer and dearer. All my hopes and fears were centred now on Maud; I could almost have been base enough to traffic away the other, to insure *her* safety. Neither my diplomacy nor the surrender of our purses seemed to satisfy the ill-looking throng, pressing closer round us every instant. Suddenly, after the noiseless fashion of dreamland, there stood in the midst of them a man utterly different from the rest.

A respectable personage at first sight; tall and portly, and rubicund of visage; with short grizzled hair and crisp whiskers carefully trimmed; clad in such sober, sad-coloured raiment as might befit an elderly parson off duty. It was not an evil face, till you noticed the working of the thick sensual lips, and the vicious twinkle of the small deep-set eyes. I had never then looked upon that man, either in the flesh or in portraiture; but I should know him now amongst ten thousand. There were impressed upon my memory even such minutiae as the frequent wrinkles on his long clerical waistcoat; the trim accuracy of his black silk necktie; and two tiny Maltese crosses in jet, fastening a spotless shirt-front.

Maud was cowering close to my shoulder, and instantly I felt sure that she and the new-comer were—old acquaintances, to say the least of it. No actual sign of re-

cognition passed between them: but in her eyes there was a kind of contemptuous aversion; and in his a wicked hunger that made my blood—it's cool enough too, as a rule—boil savagely. He took no further notice of her—addressing himself at once to me.

'You have fallen into bad hands here,' he said, in a thick throat-voice. 'But I have influence over these men, and can set you clear if I will. I *do* will—on certain terms.'

Hating him worse every moment, I tried to keep my passion down.

'Name your terms,' I said. 'I've heard of monkish brigands often enough; but a bandit-clergyman *is* a novelty.'

He never noticed the stupid taunt; but drew closer to me—so close, that his breath burnt my cheek as he whispered,

'You shall all go free, if—you will make *her* kiss me thrice on the mouth.'

Cursing is not among my virtues, any more than valour—so far as I know—is among my virtues. But I refused with a bitter blasphemy; bidding him touch her—no need to ask whom he meant—at his peril.

Whilst the words were on my lips, I became aware that Maud was no longer quite close to my side; when I turned, she was just out of arm's-length, and two or three figures had thrust themselves betwixt us. At the same time I saw, through an open door, a circular stair—or rather, a steep incline with ledges; for the steps were low and broad enough for a horse to have climbed. Towards this Maud was being urged by the mere sway of the crowd; all my struggles brought me no nearer to her side; and when I turned in my despair to grapple at *his* throat I was foiled there too; for he had glided round somehow, and stood beckoning at the stair-head.

Margaret had passed out of my

sight and my thoughts together; I only saw the horror on Maud's white face, and the agony in her soft gray eyes. At last she disappeared through the doorway; and I also was borne thitherwards by the surge of the crowd; no one seemed actually to hinder me from advancing; it was rather the numbness of my own limbs that kept me back. Before I got half-way down the endless dusky stair, I heard Maud's voice from below—she had never spoken since we were first beset—calling piteously on my name; and still, though my brain was on fire, my limbs grew colder and my sinews slacker. I reached the lowest step in time to see her carried by four bandits across a vast empty chamber, closed at the further end by a door of open iron-work, through which it was easy to see into a smaller room beyond.

My strength came back when it was useless, for I could not stir by a hair's-breadth the great bars that I clutched and tore at.

And then—God!—it sickens me even now—I had to endure the most awful torture that can befall a man—the looking on helplessly while the uttermost outrage is wrought on the woman he loves best of all.

All at once, a voice spoke softly in my ear.

'*Povero!* They might at least have drawn the curtain.'

Close behind me stood a *contadina*, with one of the heavy handsome faces common in the Romagna. She pitied me, I knew; but she belonged, I knew also, to one of my tormentors. I turned on her like a mad dog and gripped her throat, driving my nails into her flesh, and dashing her head against the bars. As I so wrestled, the piteous wail from within, that had grown wilder every instant, rose to a shriek; and the shriek

was drowned in a burst of hoarse devil's laughter. With these sounds on my ear, I—woke, half-choked with heart-throbs, the blood streaming from my knuckles through the coating of plaster dashed from the wall.

Nethercote's lips were working painfully as he stopped for breath; and his hand shook till the tumbler rattled as he set it down. We, who listened, were also much moved in our different ways; not so much by the story itself, as by the passionate earnestness—so utterly foreign to the man's nature—with which it had been told. For my own part, I could not realise that Frank had only been speaking of a mere fantastic vision; it sounded unpleasantly like a real episode hitherto carefully kept in the background, and brought forward at last half-involuntarily; just as great crimes have been confessed by their perpetrators, after half a lifetime's silence, without a shadow of reason. I think the others were similarly affected: Challoner's face was a perfect study of doubt and difficulty; and a muttered oath—Sydney Thornton's formula of bewilderment—was barely audible under his moustache. The silence was not otherwise broken till Frank spoke again, this time in his wonted deliberate fashion.

You don't suppose I've kept you up merely to listen to an ugly nightmare? The curious part of it happened afterwards.

I did not try to sleep again after getting thoroughly awake; but read and smoked till I dozed off, from weariness, about sunrise. All that day I was too busy with Dick Hayston's balance-sheet to ponder on visions; but, towards bedtime, I began to feel rather apprehensive as to what the night might bring forth. A sort of whim—I can't call it a suspicion—made me put the watch and its appendages on a



table instead of under my pillow. I said to myself—'The ticking might make me nervous'—knowing all the while this was a palpable excuse. However, I slept neither better nor worse than my wont; and, since then, have never been troubled with such a nightmare.

I saw Maud on the day of my return to England. Of course her first question was—Why I wore my hand in a sling? I told her all I *could* tell, whilst she was busied with the change of lockets; for my own was in working order again. Whilst I was speaking she drew close to my side, holding my hand fast, so that I felt her shiver as I ended; she was quite pale too, as she looked up in my face, and asked me to repeat the description of the wicked elder. Then she rose quickly, and unlocked a drawer in which were a heap of photographs, the weedings of a vast collection not deemed worthy of a nook in any of her albums.

'Do you recognise it?' she said, holding one out to me.

I fairly sprang up in my amazement. I saw—for the very first time with waking eyes, I solemnly aver—the exact semblance of my dreamland enemy. There were the broad square face, the thick sensual lips, the crisp, strong, grizzled hair, the hungry twinkling eyes, the tall portly figure; and—as I am a living man—there was the dress, rendered to its minutest item, down to the tie of the neckerchief, and the Maltese crosses fastening the shirt-front.

I was still staring stupidly at the photograph when Maud nestled down by my knee, and began to recite her *mea culpa*. It was brief enough, though I need not give it in her words.

It seemed she had not been frank with me about the locket. The initials it bore were a woman's

indeed, but those of one dead long before it came into Maud's possession; and the giver was a man; a clergyman, who in old times held a living near her father's place, and had admired—that's a mild word for it—Maud from girlhood upwards. At a Christmas party at his house a mock raffle was got up, wherein every one drew the prize specially designed for them. This *brodoque*, which had belonged to the host's deceased wife, fell to Maud's share. She thought the whole affair utterly absurd, she said, and so raised no scruples about the gift; but she never wore it, and tossed it aside that same night into the jewel-case, where we found it.

'He was very disagreeable,' Maud confessed, with a slight shiver; 'but I daresay he was more sincere than most of you. And I know he would have risked his soul to gain—what he asked for in your dream; and his lips never once touched the tips of my fingers. Do you believe me?'

I did believe her, for her bitterest rival never imputed to the wayward little fairy such a fancy as Titania's. Yet I felt, and probably looked, somewhat out of humour; and her eyes followed me anxiously, as I walked to and fro with the locket in my hand.

'You don't value it much?' I said, pointing to the photograph that lay where I had thrown it beside her.

She smiled saucily, as she tossed it into the fire, and laughed merrily, as I ground the locket to powder between my heel and the hearthstone.

So the cloud passed away from over us then, leaving no shadow behind it; but, somehow, by tacit consent, we stored away this, my magnetic experience, amongst the disagreeable memories that are

not for daily use. Most minds have their Ember-days, I suppose ; and at such seasons they cannot choose their own food. Once or twice—always in the twilight—Maud and I did speak of these things again. On one of these occasions she told me, that for some years past she had entirely lost sight of her admirer; financial difficulties caused him to resign his preferment and reside abroad ; he had been too lavish, I suppose, of his love and his lockets, in quarters where they were more gratefully received.

He and I have never foregathered, nor is it at all likely that we ever shall. On the whole, I'm glad of it. It's difficult enough to call a parson to account for injury or insult wrought in the flesh, with both eyes wide open ; but the veriest fire-eater could hardly make one of his fellows amenable for a wrong done beyond the frontier of dream-land. Nevertheless—I repeat it—I'm well pleased that our paths have never crossed. I'm convinced I should not be an hour in that divine's company without committing one of those gross breaches of our holy Convenience-code that are not to be atoned for by private repentance or public apology—rather an annoying thing for a man who 'travels on his temper.'

So you have my story. Such as it is, it's as true and unvarnished as the Newgate Calendar; but it carries no moral or warning that I'm aware of, except that it's unwise to meddle with other men's love-tokens, even at second-hand ; and that the

unwritten law of trespass is sometimes carried out more rigidly than it is set down in Blackstone.

And now, perhaps, Harcourt's great mind will be set at ease as to my half-and-half scepticism about spiritualism ; and Sydney will admit the bare possibility of a non-erotic conversation between people of different sexes, both on this side of middle age. Gerald, I know you smoke with Pantheists and all manner of philosophers, at some of your halting-places beyond seas ; if you ever come across a pendant or parallel to this small experience of mine, I wish you'd keep it for me. And now, good-night everybody. I hope, for the sake of straight powder to-morrow, that none of us will be priest-ridden in our dreams. Sir Harry will hardly take that excuse ; and the rocketers will travel fast down wind, unless it lulls before morning.'

So Nethercote lounged away, lazy and leisurely as ever. We, who stayed behind, talking over what we had heard, could scarcely realise that we had seen such passion on his face a little while ago. We went to bed at last, without coming to any satisfactory conclusion. To this day, I think Sydney Thoroton believes that he listened to a tale of real life set forth allegorically ; Harcourt Challoner, I hear, is becoming nearly a nuisance to his intimates concerning things spiritual ; and I who speak, in all my wanderings, have found none so skilled in Oneiromancy as to expound to me Frank Nethercote's Dream.

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'The call is with me, I conclude?' said Carew, after a few moments' pause. 'Perhaps you, sir, will make a male Schehezerade of yourself

for our amusement?' The gentleman addressed, portly, merry-faced, and middle-aged, smiled, and at once accepted the position by commencing

### THE SOLICITOR'S STORY.

I HATE a steamboat.

I don't mean particularly our own steamboat—if we may call it our own. That takes only its rateable proportion of the hatred which I distribute over the entire steam navy of the universe. I hate everything which bears the name of steamboat. This feeling I at once allow to be perfectly irrational, but that is not the question. My antipathies are based on a set of circumstances which I shall be happy—at least, which I have no objection—to tell; if you will accept them as my contribution to the narrative pic-nic of the evening.

My avocation is that of a solicitor. Now I am a middle-aged man; but at the time I speak of I was seventeen years younger than I am at present.

I don't know whether any of you have ever been at Orsova. Nobody claims acquaintance with that place? Very well, you have lost nothing; but of course you all know where it is. However, to prevent mistakes, I will mention that it is on the Danube, before you get down to the Iron Gate, and that you stop there to be put into wagons, and conveyed along the left bank until you reach Skela Gladova, where lie the big steamers for the Black Sea.

Some business at Odessa took me down the Danube to Orsova, whence I proposed to go into Galatz, where the Russian vessel awaited me. The business does not bear upon my story. I was then the junior member of the firm of which I am now the head, and I can afford to say that I had not then buckled to work with the

earnestness which my partners might have liked to see. They could, at all events, very well spare me for the six weeks' trip; and though it was not perhaps exactly flattering to be told that I could not do better than undertake the Odessa affair, instead of leaving it to a clerk, I put up with the implied hint, and went away in excellent spirits. I had never travelled much, and was glad of the opportunity of going where comparatively few Englishmen went in those days. A very short time afterwards, you know, came incidents which sent thousands of Englishmen into those parts, many of them never to return; but in the year of which I speak most of us would have thought a war with Russia as unlikely as three years ago we thought a war with Abyssinia.

You can all see for yourselves that I am gray, and that my figure is not that of a lady-killer. But at the time I speak of I was a reasonably good-looking young fellow, with probably as much consciousness of the fact as was good for me. I have now a son of whom the same things may be said.

Well, the steamboat journey from Vienna, where I left the railway, had amused me a good deal. I won't trouble you with the slightest description of Danube scenery—probably some of you have got Mr. Murray's *South Germany* in your trunks, or if not, you can get it when you go home, if my story interests you up to the point of wishing to know more of the district. I am not vain enough, now, to suppose that it will. The Da-



nube would be a fine fellow, if he did not try to do so very much, but he is in places preposterously wide, and in others not nearly deep enough. The Iron Gate illustrates the second of his weaknesses—it is a sort of *plateau* of rock, over which nothing but small craft can go; and those often get wrecked, as happened in the case of an American pedlar, who insisted on rowing through the troubled waters: he had knocked against too many snags, he said, to care for the feeble old rocks of the Danube. He went off with all his miscellaneous wares, and was singing at the top of his voice—

‘Hail, Columbia, happy land!’

when his boat was cloven in twain, his wares departed into the waves, and he, providentially caught on a rock, gallantly completed the couplet with a rhyme that may be pardoned for its badness, but not for its profanity:

‘If I ain’t ruined, I’ll be ——’

and so forth. I had very good reason for wishing that I had confined myself to hearing stories of that kind on board the boat from Vienna.

We were, of course, a miscellaneous company, very unlike the typical representatives whom I have the honour to address. I remember that among the number, which was much too large for comfort, especially at night, was a very handsome Austrian officer, exceedingly happy with his pretty and newly married wife, a Venetian. He had served at the siege of Venice, and declared that he had captured her there, but she laughingly denied it, and asserted that she had taken him prisoner. He was fond of affecting great fear lest she should be seized as contraband goods from Italy; in fact, he was so joyous that he was all day long inventing some fun in order to keep himself at all in hand. There

were a few merry girls, chiefly Venetians, and they were going to Bucharest, for which free and easy place their manners seemed tolerably well fitted, and they much scandalised some American ladies by marked flirtations, in which there was far more noise than meaning. Their mirth contrasted with the sadness of a feeble-minded old courier, who almost cried when anyone spoke to him, his grief being that employers did not pay him as they used to do, and that he made nothing by his trips. It was very kind of the American family to whom he was attached to pay him at all, for he was not of the least use, and left them to manage everything for themselves. There was a pleasant-faced Dane, with a pretty sister. He had been formerly in the Sultan’s service in the ship-building department, but had left it because his pay was reduced. He was going to Odessa, but we lost him at Galatz, because his sister’s pass had not arrived; and although he had resided at Odessa for two years, he was not allowed to vouch for the poor little thing’s harmlessness to the throne of the great Nicholas the First. An American lady called her a fleshy girl, but the charge was not true, nor was the epithet gracious. A splendid Albanian came on board with some Turks, and lighted up the whole deck with his glory. He was stuck all over with fire-arms, but they did not seem very serviceable. The Turks said their prayers in their usual attitude, which made some ill-bred, ill-dressed, ill-washed Frenchmen grin; but afterwards, when the chief of the Mohammedans had some coffee made, and kindly sent cups to several of us, and it was found to be deliciously unlike the dingy mess we got in the cabin, there was no toleration for the scoffers, who were a good deal snubbed

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when they attempted new sarcasm. There was a fine-looking Hungarian, who spoke no language that I knew except Latin, which we barbarised fearfully together, my English pronunciation thereof not helping me to his comprehension; but we got on somehow, and he sang me a song, of which I remember a verse—if the ladies will pardon it: the sentiment is Bacchanalian, but otherwise unobjectionable;

“Gaudeamus igitur  
Hungari dum sumus,  
Nam dant vinum copiosum  
Jam in uvis gloriosum  
Almus sol et humus.”

I just mention these people because it appears that we are in no particular hurry, and you may like a general idea of the company on board the Danube boats. I was the only Englishman.

During the voyage, which occupied many days owing to the difficulty of navigation, our occasional transfer into abominable barges, and the exceeding indolence of the rowers and apathy of the captain—by the way, one of the Americans had fully made up his mind, he said, to shoot that officer for mooring us at places where we could get no food—I told him I thought that he had better not, but I was almost sorry when he consented to stay execution—during the voyage, I say, I talked to everybody who could or would talk to me, and I flattered myself that I was becoming a very accomplished cosmopolitan. Among those whom I specially honoured in this way was a young lady who was travelling with her husband, a man much older than herself. They had come from London. She was Polish, he was an Italian; and I need not say that to an Englishman they ventured remarks about oppressed nationalities, and their being drawn together by a common misfortune. Both spoke

English very fairly, and it was a relief to me to converse with them after my conscientious but painful efforts to deliver my sentiments in French. Everybody should learn to talk French, even at the cost of confounding Pindar with Pindar of Wakefield and the latter with the Vicar. The husband was tall, thin, and gray, and rather shabbily dressed,—a long and rusty great-coat, and a fur-eared cap, being the principal features in his costume. He had worn earrings, for I saw the holes, but the rings were gone: perhaps he had been compelled to part with them. His face was rather handsome for a foreigner's, and his eyes were dark and fine. He always spoke in a melancholy voice, which fact I set down to exile and trouble.

The lady was what I suppose I should now call prettyish—at that time I thought her very pretty indeed. Plenty of light hair, large blue eyes, and a mouth that seemed always inclined to laugh, but which was restrained, and made to substitute a pensive half-smile—those are my recollections of the face as I first saw it, and as I saw it until the time I am going to speak of. I do not know that it matters, but I may as well add that she was rather tall, and wore a closely-fitting dark cloth dress, which showed that her figure was good, but slight. Her hands and feet were not good—she hid the feet as much as she could, but the hands she could not help showing, at dinner-time particularly. It was at that meal that I first spoke to her. It was not a romantic introduction, but it arose out of a little bit of sentiment on my side; for I observed that the vile wine which her husband had ordered—the best he could afford—was distasteful to her, and I ventured to offer them some of mine. Englishman like, I had, of course,

selected the most expensive thing to be had, and that was bad enough. They seemed surprised, but accepted the offer with ready good breeding, and we became travelling friends. I sat near them a good deal on deck, lent the young wife my rugs and wraps—her own appointments of that kind were scant—and we grew very confidential. It was not a flirtation—let me say that I was an engaged man at the time—but they, or at least she, interested me, and I suppose she was pleased with my interest. The husband was more fond of going forward and smoking a huge pipe than of joining in our conversation, but he was always very civil and melancholy, and accepted my cigars without any fuss or undue gratitude.

Permit me to say that I see what you have made up your minds to hear. The vain young Englishman made love to the lady, and the husband resented it, and there was a scene. Nothing of the sort. I wish that had been the course of events. We could not have fought with deadly weapons, and if he had tried to thrash me, he would not have succeeded. But there was no love-making. I thought a good deal about a lady in England, who is now, I fear, particularly anxious because the weather is so bad, and she does not know how very comfortable her husband is, and in what pleasant society. The Polish lady was quick enough, I daresay, to find out that my heart was garrisoned—if not, she is the only woman I have ever met who made a mistake on such a point, though I have met many who defied the garrison and tried to storm the citadel.

I should have mentioned that she called her husband Cosmo, and that he called her Zinna. This she told me was not her name, but

was Russian for Winter. The reason for his giving it she hinted that I was not to ask—some love-nonsense I supposed.

The sleeping and toilet arrangements on board that boat were very detestable. We all occupied the huge cabin, from under the seats of which sliding beds were pulled out at night, with the feet pointing centrally. When I say beds, I mean padded boards. Nobody, of course, thought of disrobing; but we loosened cravats, kicked off shoes, and otherwise made ourselves a little easy. There was frightful snoring in that hot den. With the first dawn I used to rush out of it, go up on deck, and eschewing the hideous lavatory appliances of the cabin, give myself an honest and a freshening wash in a pail of water newly drawn from the Danube by the sailors, who indulged my taste for a practice which their laughter showed me was not very usual on that vessel.

We were nearing Orsova early in the morning of the day I am going to speak of, and I had just completed my *al fresco* wash by the bows, and was looking at the Servian mountains, rich in green, and decked with shifting mist-wreaths—

‘Sir,’ said a voice near me.

I turned, and confronted my friend Signor Cosmo. I saluted him cheerfully, for I felt very cheerful, the rather that we were soon to be released from our disagreeable ship. But he did not respond to my attempt at civility, at which I wondered a little.

‘I wish to speak a word to you, sir.’

‘Fifty, if you like.’

‘Fewer will suffice. I forbid you to talk any more to Madame.’

I stared at him with considerable surprise, because we had parted in perfect cordiality overnight, if

going to different ends of a saloon can be called parting.

'I don't understand, signor.'

'Yet my words are good English.'

'Yes; I don't mean that. But what makes you say this to me? Surely I have not had the misfortune to offend Madame? If so, it was without intention; but I have no recollection of anything of the kind.'

'It appears to me that a husband has a right to say who shall talk to his wife.'

'Well, in a sense, yes,' said I, beginning to get angry; 'but he must show some signs of rationality. Here were we talking in a friendly way on this deck a few hours ago, and now you come to me with a rude speech, and an order for which I see no kind of reason.'

'It is enough that I have one.'

'No, it is not quite enough, signor. Is it by Madame's wish that you say this to me?'

'It is by my own wish.'

'Very well. I intend to know what it means. Of course, I have no desire to force myself on any one; but I shall not submit to impertinence. I tell you that I shall speak as usual to Madame when she comes on deck, and after that I shall see. If Madame talks to me, I shall talk to her.'

'She will not talk to you.'

'I ask you why.'

'Because I have forbidden her.'

'Again I ask why.'

'Because of my will.'

'Look here, signor,' said I; 'a quarrel between us would be very absurd, and an Englishman hates to be absurd. But he also hates to be dictated to. If you do not choose to give me a reason for obeying your desire, I will not obey it, and I will ask Madame what it means.'

'You had better not!' he said, unbuttoning his long coat, and

showing me that he had a stiletto affixed to his waistcoat. This act put me into a terrible rage, and I said,

'Don't try your theatrical tricks with me. If you don't button up that rubbish, and apologise for showing it, I will knock you down, drag you into the saloon, and tell all the people why.'

'Do me first the honour to feel my arm,' he said, extending it.

My answer was angry. I need not repeat it.

'Well, you will feel it in another way if you disobey me,' he replied, and with singular alacrity he darted away, and the next moment was diving down into the cabin.

Ion, in the beautiful play, states that he has asked a dreadful question of the hills. It did not occur to me, not being poetical, to apply for information to the Servian mountains, on which I suppose I was unconsciously staring, but I sought it at a nearer source—my own vanity. Of course I told myself something of the story which I imagine you thought I was going to tell you. I had been too fascinating to Madame; and really I had not intended to be so. But, after all, it is not an unpleasant thing to know that one can be dangerous, and I began to feel less resentment against the signor. I would be more careful. But still I would not be intimidated into entire silence when I approached Madame Zinna. In this moderate and rather complacent mood I remained on deck until the time when the beds were usually pushed under the seats, and the cabin was ventilated, and eating and drinking recommenced.

When I went down I saw Cosmo and his wife at the further end of the table. I removed my hat, looking at them, but no return courtesy was manifested. I took my seat, and demanded coffee. While wait-

ing for it I looked several times in the direction of my late friends, and Madame's blue eyes turned on me for a moment. The next, Cosmo suddenly snatched something from her and thrust it into his breast-pocket. She made an appealing gesture, but did not, I thought, speak. They were on bad terms, then.

Presently he rose, and signed to her to follow him out of the saloon. He passed me close, taking no notice; but as Zinna came by she touched me on the shoulder, and dropped a scrap of card beside me. Then she went after her imperious lord.

On the card were pencilled four words—

*'He has sold me.'*

'Two mysteries before breakfast!' said I. 'One certainly does get something by travelling. What on earth, or on water, does the woman mean? Sold her? She must be mad.'

But that peculiarly British explanation of everything which one does not understand or does not like, failed to satisfy me. If she had been an ugly old woman, it might have done so; but her eyes were very blue, and I resolved to know a little more. Besides, I had only half forgiven the Signor, and felt new anger with him for the violence I had just seen him exhibit. When I got upon deck again the couple were standing apart from the other passengers, and near the wheel. I determined to speak to them. He can't draw his stiletto without unbuttoning that abominable coat, I thought, and if he lays a finger on a button I shall be too quick for him.

So I walked straight up to them, raised my hat, and said,

'In your presence, signor, there can be no objection to my asking pardon of Madame if I have in any way offended her.'

He smiled, made no answer, but strode away to a distant part of the ship.

'No, it is he who is mad,' thought I.

But Zinna gave me no time to consider what course, in a Danube boat, was equivalent to getting a commission *de lunatico* in London.

'Offended *me*?' she said hurriedly, and in a low voice, though no one was near. 'No, no; it is you who are offended. But you have read?'

'The card?—yes. What can you mean?'

'What I have wrote. You know that Turk who gave the coffee? He is a Pasha, brother-in-law to the Sultan. Ask your friend the shipman; he knows that Turk. I am his. He has sold me.'

'Your husband has? Impossible!' I said stupefied, and trying to make myself realise the fact that I was getting into Oriental latitudes.

'My husband? No; we have deceived you, but it was his will. He is my father, and he has sold me to the Pasha. I know not when I am to be taken off this ship, but when the moment comes it will be my signal. I go there.'

And she pointed to the turbid waters of the Danube.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, I won't trouble you with my sensations. I can sum them up in a somewhat colloquial phrase, and tell you that I was struck all in a heap, or I can dilate upon the gradually increasing conviction that came upon me, and tell you how I reflected that pashas did buy ladies, and that we were close to Turkish territory, and so forth. But I had better relate what followed. Each of you can imagine the feelings of a young and untravelled man when apprised by a young and charming girl that she was sold.



'But against your will? That cannot be allowed,' I said.

'The Sultan's brother-in-law can do as he pleases. There is no escape for me but the waters, and they shall receive me when I am called to my master. My father was making the bargain yesterday. Did you not see him often talk to the Pasha? Did you not see him making signs with his fingers?'

'Yes; but I thought he was showing some trick for the Turk's amusement.'

'He was bargaining for me,' she said, calmly raising her blue eyes to my face. 'The Pasha bid him command you not to speak to me.'

'Curse the Pasha!' I said, furiously; 'he is nothing to me. I will insult him before the whole ship, the old scoundrel! Claim protection from all of us. Do you think that a company of Christian gentlemen will see a Christian girl dragged off to a harem?'

'They see it often on these boats,' she said. 'It would be of no avail. The captain would set me ashore on that bank, and then I am on Turkish land. There is no escape but that one. There was another this morning—at least, a chance—but it is gone. You saw how it went.'

'I saw—'

'Listen. We stop at Orsova. I know one person there; but he will not help me without pay. My father does not know him; but he knows what money will do, and he has taken my purse from me. I had thought to slip away in the crowd when we all rush into Orsova for breakfast. It is a poor chance, and it is gone. But there is a certain escape left me.'

And once more she pointed down upon the stream.

'Orsova!' said a score of jubilant voices. We were rapidly nearing the dirty-looking town.

'My master will soon give the

word from his cabin,' she said. 'Ah, you are sorry for me. You are a good man, and you are in love. May your bride be happy with you! Give her this, from a poor girl who has gone down into the deep rather than accept shame. It has no value, or I would have used it in my great need.'

It was a little cornelian cross, with a blue ribbon attached—the colour of her eyes.

'Here,' I said, emptying my own purse into her hand, and giving her a great quantity of gold and silver, 'for God's sake make the escape, if possible. Bribe sentinels, officers, anybody; they will all take it, I am told. In the worst, fly to our Consul, and swear you are English. Gain time and bribe freely. Here are some notes.'

'There may be a hope yet,' she said. 'You are an angel. I am too young to die; yet I will, if—'

'Don't talk of dying. Conceal yourself until the right moment.'

The blue eyes, swimming in tears, were raised again. She snatched my hand, kissed it, and darted away.

'If the villain comes near me now,' I said, 'I will fell him to the deck, let the consequences be what they may.'

And I would, and should; but he came near me no more, and I lost sight of him in the rush at landing. Zinna also disappeared; but when, I knew not, though I watched narrowly for her. Then came the struggle for the little wagons, the passport business, and the long delay, after which we went off in a rapid procession to the frontier, and so to Skela Gladova. When the large steamer started, neither father nor child was on board. I reached Odessa in due time, sojourned there, and did the business on which I had come; and one night I went to the theatre—the Russian theatre.

I knew no Russian, but thought I might as well see everything.

'What does that mean?' I said, showing a line in the playbill to my friend the shipbuilder, who had by this time arrived with the pretty sister of whom Nicholas I. was so afraid. They had kindly come with me, though this theatre is not patronised by the respectabilities.

'A kind of interlude,' he said, '*Pleasing Feats of Strength and Grace*.'

And they were very pleasing. The man was very strong, the woman was very graceful. But it was not so pleasing to me to recognise Signor Cosmo and Madame Zinna as the performers, or to notice that when they retired, amid

plaudits, each threw a marked salute at me, with beaming smiles.

However, we all get 'done' a good many times before we learn to be men of the world. I don't think I felt much ashamed. Zinna's eyes were so very blue.

'When you tell that story again,' said the Detrimental, 'I suggest your laying the scene somewhere else; because in Mr. Shirley Brooks's delightful little volume, *Russians of the South*, he says that he came to Orsova in a barge, there being no water for big steamers.'

'I suppose there may be more water at one time than another,' said the narrator, laughing; 'but I thank you for the hint, nevertheless.'

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'I think,' said the last speaker, 'that we might fairly ask one of the ladies present to tell us a story. You, madame,' turning to a woman dressed very poorly but in perfect taste, and thoroughly French—'No? why the very fact of such an unmistakable Frenchwoman—and I mean it as a compliment—going to England at this time of year, is doubtless—if the true cause were known—in itself interesting.'

IF the society can really wish to know my errand (said the old Frenchwoman, with a little humble salutation that seemed to take in every person present at once), I am on my way to London—the first time that I find myself so far from Paris since I was born. I go there to visit my daughter. She would have been twenty-eight years of age on the last Toussaint. She was nine when she left me. I have thus been alone, messieurs et mesdames, exactly nineteen years and seven days. It was on the sixteenth of December that the little one went; but I count from the day of her death, you understand, a week later—a week later.

I am an old woman now, and can shed no more tears. I can tell

you about her just as I could tell you about the new piece that came out at our theatre last week. Is it at my age that one can begin to weep? When one has choked back tears for as many years as I have, does not the heart, do not the eyes, become dry? Among these gentlemen there will doubtless be those who could explain what I mean in better words. I know it to be true, and in that all is said.

Old? Yes, I am very old—forty-eight in years; sixty, seventy by the side of a woman of the world. What will you have? Ours is a life that burns quick. But when the child left me I was in the prime still of my youth and of my looks. The company may well smile. Difficult to believe, is it not, that I

could ever have been handsome? Messieurs, I was more than handsome; I was celebrated! I am—I mean (very humbly the old woman corrected herself) I was—Rosa du Champi up to the year eighteen hundred and fifty—one of the first rope-dancers, as this society must know, in Paris. It is not to speak of myself that I occupy your time, or I might tell you something

about my youth—youth without youth—youth spent in the hardest of all work, for I was bred up to the life of the ring—but these gentlemen have asked me for a story, and I am going to tell the story of a child; of mine only what is needful to make a setting for hers—a dark, tarnished setting, messieurs, but yet the one God willed her life should have. I am going to tell

### THE STORY OF SUZETTE.

SHE was born—well, I thought I should get through it better, but I was wrong: I didn't know what it would be when I came to speak of her before a society—born on the first of November, eighteen hundred and forty-one, and for nine years was my companion, day and night, and at every moment that I could get away to her from the circus. My husband was an artiste too—a very humble one, though to the last he believed himself a great genius undervalued by the public. These gentlemen would laugh to be told that the parts he filled were those of walking tortoises, monster toads or lizards in the Christmas pieces; and between us both our salary was seldom more than thirty or forty francs a week, and this only for certain seasons of the year. However, we had bread—bread, and to spare—and the child.

She was a little blonde-haired girl, healthy, full of life as a bird, in our poor fifth-floor lodging, and with grace, with intelligence beyond her years. When she was four years old she could read. Her father—at that time he cared to be more with us—used to teach her little parts from the fairy-pieces, and she would act them with the airs of a queen, dressing herself in the bits of rags I gave her to play with when I was away at rehearsal. She

could dance, she could sing—could do everything. 'Thou hast not made much noise in the world thyself, my poor Rosa,' the man would say; 'but Suzette will make up for it when she is a woman. The child is an artiste by birth—as I was, *ma foi!* only I had no perseverance—will be celebrated some day.' So said her director, so everyone who saw her said: for I was vain—as she grew bigger would take her in my hand to rehearsal, and make her show her little attitudes and dance her little steps before them all. And all were wrong! She never became celebrated. Perhaps—but I am ignorant, 'tis no place of mine to speak of such things—she became what for herself was better.

Well, as the years went on the man grew to be ailing. He had never been strong—the dust and the gas and the late hours of the circus were too much for him, I believe—and at last he lost heart in life altogether, and began to drink and to have companions. As far as my own salary went, we had nothing to complain of. Instead of losing ground as so many women do when their twenty years are past, I advanced with the public, gained courage, strength, suppleness. Still I had a long road to travel before I could command a high salary—as much, I mean,





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THE STORY OF SUZETTE.

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as forty or fifty francs a week. And there were three mouths to fill, and the child to keep neat—and though I found time at night to make her things myself, there was always the material—and doctor's bills to pay; and old debts, that my husband had contracted without my knowledge, began to press on me. So things went on from bad to worse, and at last at the time I speak of, nineteen years ago, all I could see before us was ruin. The man had no engagement at all now, was upon his bed, sick or feigning to be sick, half his time, and the rent of our room was due, and every franc of my salary for a month to come was pledged. I don't try to excuse myself for what followed; but I tell thus much of my position that the society may understand better the temptation three or four hundred francs seemed to me. Four hundred francs! Yes, it was for this—think of it, mes-sieurs, who have little daughters waiting for you at home—that I sold her.

One biting winter morning—I must tell my story quicker, I must not try the patience of the company—I was going in, heavier-hearted than usual, to rehearsal (that day I had been obliged to give them cold breakfast, and the man for the first time in his life had raised his hand upon the child), when our director met me and bade me step with him into his private room. A stranger was standing before the fire; a smiling, pleasant-faced man—through all these years have I forgotten a feature of his face? 'Here is a good woman who, I believe, can give you what you want, Rix,' said our director. 'Rosa, my daughter, I have heard of a chance for Suzette—a chance such as doesn't descend from the clouds to everyone, I can tell thee.'

And then the stranger began to speak, and ask me if I had not a

little daughter at home; and between them both my temptation was laid before me. M. Rix was at that time the director of the Porte St. Martin Theatre, and his troupe had been engaged for a fortnight's performance in London at Christmas. They were to act, he told me, one of the fairy-pieces that had just then become the rage in Paris, and for this a girl nine or ten years old was wanted as a centre figure in the last transformation scene.

'She must be *belle comme un petit ange*,' said our director. 'She must have courage, she must have wit enough to learn and repeat a part of twenty or thirty lines; and all this I tell my friend the little Suzette possesses. Be a wise girl, Rosa,' for I was standing silent—stupefied at the bare thought of parting with her. 'Some of the ladies in the troupe will take as much care of the little one as if she was at home, and M. Rix will give you four hundred francs for the fortnight. Run back now and bring the child, that he may judge for himself if I have over-praised her.'

I went back home heavier-hearted than I came, and found the man sitting, his head between his hands, by the cold stove, the child shivering at his side. 'We have an offer of four hundred francs,' I cried; 'but I, for one, don't want to profit by it. Suzette wouldn't like to leave father and mother and go with a strange gentleman across the sea to London?' And then I told my husband, in a few words, what offer this was that had been made us.

'Four hundred francs,' he said; 'and the child well nourished for a fortnight; and you will refuse it! That, of course; it were a little thing that I should die here of cold and starvation, so long as your caprices, your follies, were gratified.'

Suzette came and put her hand,

blue and swollen with cold, into mine. 'Let me go, little mamma!' she cried—'let me go with this gentleman, and get money for you and papa. I'm not afraid—me! Didn't I go that Sunday to St. Cloud without either of you? I'll learn my part, and bring back money for papa to buy tobacco, and have a fire again.' Then she ran over, poor baby, to the man's side, and kissed him.

Well, I put on her best frock and a clean cap, and had her back as quick as I could to the circus. 'Let her recite something,' our director said, when M. Rix had made me take off her cap and show her hair and white neck and arms, and had expressed himself content with her beauty. And she recited, in her clear voice, a little piece of fifteen or twenty lines.

'That will do—that will do!' said M. Rix, rubbing his hands. 'Madame, I compliment you. The child is a marvel of beauty and intelligence. Now the only thing is, has she nerve—courage?'

A shudder ran through my veins at the question. 'But, sir,' I stammered, 'nerve—courage? How can these be wanted from a child—a baby of her age?'

'Simply for this,' answered M. Rix; 'she will have, in the final scene, to be suspended by wires at some height above the stage; and unless she has nerve there's no good to think of her. In reality, she will be as safe as she is this moment at your side; but I will have no rehearsal scenes, as some directors have, with frightened screaming little children. I'm a father myself,' he added, 'and I respect the feelings of a parent. Unless the child has courage, I will have nothing to do with her.'

'And who says I have not courage?' cried Suzette. 'Try me on your wires, then, and see if I will scream and be frightened!'

'We can, in effect, try her in a moment,' said our director. 'I have the machinery close at hand for suspending a flying figure treble her weight above the ring; and if, after all, she is frightened, we need not raise her six feet from the ground. Courage, Rosa, foolish girl!' he cried, clapping me on the shoulder. 'How is the child to grow up to her profession if thou art always to hold her by the hand? Come, Suzette, and show the mother which has the best heart of the two!'

We went into the half-lit ring, and in a few minutes' time Suzette was fastened securely in the apparatus, and raised six or eight feet above the ground. 'Higher, higher!' she cried. 'Do you think I am afraid? Little mamma, I feel just as safe as I ever did in your arms.'

Slowly and carefully they raised her higher still; and then, throwing herself at once into the attitude they bade her take, she stretched out one hand—I see her now, in her poor merino frock, her hair hanging round her neck—and again repeated her little speech.

M. Rix was in raptures. He took her in his arms when she came down, kissed her, gave her a twenty-franc piece to buy herself a doll. 'But, gentlemen,' said the child, looking from one to the other, 'if you please, I shall buy charcoal for the stove and some tobacco for papa.'

It was all decided. She should go next Monday, five days later, and we should receive four hundred francs for her fortnight's services—half on the day she left, half on—on—pardon me an instant, messieurs—on the day of her return.

Five days I had to prepare her for her journey. Among the troupe she was to travel with I found out one person with whom I had had slight acquaintance in days gone

by. I had nothing in money to offer the woman, but I had a little pearl pin, set in real gold, that I had had since I was a girl of sixteen, and this I gave her, asking her to be good to Suzette, and see that she was warm and did not wet her feet on the journey. I cut her a cloak out of my own—I was strong; what did the cold matter to me?—and a hood; and, to keep her company, I sewed her up a big doll—not such as you get in shops, I hadn't money for that, but a doll of rags—some of these ladies, even, may have made such a one for their children. Nothing would do but she must keep this doll out with her. 'My *bébé* shall see the world,' she said, 'not be laid alone in a dark cold box.' And the last time I saw her her face was smiling and nodding as the train started, and with her doll hugged up in her arms. Yes, in spite of my grief, she went away smiling. What could you expect from her, gentlemen?

M. Rix had just given her a box of sweetmeats; and she was nine years old, and had never been in a railway wagon before in her little life.

I don't know how the time passed till I got the first letter—a line or two from the woman of whom I spoke. Suzette had been well and happy on her journey; and there had been rehearsal, and the child went through her part admirably; and the first representation was to be next day—on the evening, that is to say, of the day upon which I received her letter. Well, as if fortune, my husband said, was coming to us all in a heap, the second circus lady fell ill, and I was demanded at the last hour to fill her place. She was a better artiste than me; but I was handsomer, younger—*que voulez-vous?* I was a change—the public had had the poor old Pauline as second lady for so long! And I got a great

success—bouquets, even, as fine as were thrown to Mademoiselle Irma, the première. Success, applause, bouquets, a compliment from our director as I came out of the ring; and at this hour Suzette, alone, was in the great London theatre—my baby before all those thousand careless foreign eyes—and I had no presentiment of evil! I was in better heart than I had known for months past; thought what news it would all be for Suzette, and how the man should bring her to see me if I could still keep Pauline's place when she returned.

The next night I got a step higher with the public. I had tried one of Pauline's favourite Arab scenes at rehearsal, and went through it without a fault. 'From better to better!' said the director that night. 'If Pauline does not return, I will engage thee, and Suzette for such little parts as she can fill, at more francs a month than thou hast touched hitherto in the year.'

I went home and lay awake for happiness, thinking of the altered fortunes that had come upon us. Next morning I was up before the light. The letters would not come till nine; but if I was ready to run and meet the factor, I should get mine a minute earlier than by waiting for him to ring. And a minute was a good deal when I was to hear of Suzette. I lit the fire—we could afford everything now—and got the man a comfortable breakfast; then, the time went so slow, sat down to mend some little summer frocks of the child's. At last came the factor's step. I knew it, ran out, and got my letter. It was not from the woman I have spoken of. It was from M. Rix.

Messieurs, I was never a scholar, there had not been time in my life for that sort of learning; but at one glance, quicker than it takes me to tell it, I knew what had happened.

'She is not dead!' I remember saying this to the man; then, just as I was, I tore out from the house and along the crowded Rue de Malte towards the circus.

The director had that moment arrived. 'Sir,' I said, 'give me money to go to London. Suzette has fallen!' And I put the letter of M. Rix into his hands.

He read it, and turned pale. 'This is a terrible thing for us all, my poor girl,' he said; 'but calm yourself. The child is in good care.'

'She will be in mine by to-morrow night,' I said. 'Give me money—five hundred francs—and let me start.'

Of course I know now that I made a senseless demand. The director was a humane man. I could see his heart in his face; but he had lost his second lady, and I was the only rider in the corps who could replace her, and he had children of his own at home, and the circus was their bread. He argued with me kindly at first, then, as I kept obstinate, lost temper. He would pay me what he owed me, and no more. I should show my love for Suzette better by keeping here at work, than by throwing away the money that supported us all. The child, so M. Rix wrote, was under the best surgeons in London. Then came in some of the troupe, and I had to hear the story told again and again, at every repetition sounding emptier of hope to my heart. 'The machinery had got wrong, and Suzette had fallen from a height—who should say by what fault? Not by the child's, for she was brave and collected up to the instant of her fall. They had carried her to a hospital, and she was still and out of pain, and under the best surgeons in London; and the mother—I!—should hear of her by every post.

My blood was frozen, I suppose,

for I never shed a tear. I listened quietly to all that the people round me said. 'It might turn out badly,' said one. 'It might turn out nothing,' said another. 'Think of Mademoiselle Irma herself, and how she recovered from her fall.' 'Ay, but remember the little Toni,' said a fourth; 'he fell from the rope when he was eleven, and twenty years afterwards lived crippled, and the same size still. Dost remember the old mother drawing him about in his little chair?'

The company may disbelieve me, but this last thought, the thought of Suzette being *only* helpless on my hands, *only* like Toni, crippled for life, was comfort. Anything was comfort that was not losing her. 'Monsieur le Directeur,' I cried, 'I will ride to-night. Pardon me for what I said—God knows I meant no disrespect—I will ride to-night.'

And I rode that night, and the next, and the next; for they still wrote me word she lived; and still I thought I should need money to give her all she wanted when I got her back. I remember distinctly, though 'tis nineteen years ago, how I used to feel during those three cruel nights. I was burning with fever, yet my limbs seemed stronger, more agile than ever, and—'Suzette, Suzette, Suzette!'—so rang her name through my brain—'I shall want money for thee; and perhaps thou wilt be a baby to me always; and I will buy thee a little chaise, and draw thee in the sun when my work is over.' And still went on the clarions and the drum, the cracking of the whip and the jests of the clown; and bouquets were thrown me, and I had to turn to the audience at such a point with a smile, to bend here, to spring there. What will you have, messieurs?—I had to balance myself, and the child dying!

On the fourth day came the let-

ter I looked for. She was still and out of pain to the last; and once before she died got conscious, and said, 'Mamma! I went to the circus, and drew such money as belonged to me of right; then returned home and made the man, who was a better scholar than me, write to M. Rix. 'I have so many francs,' I wrote, 'and though the child is dead, I look to you to pay me part, at least, of the money she would have earned.' And then I bade him have her buried in a decent grave, with a stone to tell her name and the date of her death; and what this cost over and above the money he owed us I would pay him when he came back to Paris. It was all I could do, you see. If I had gone to London to say good-bye to her, it would have taken all my money; and the money belonged to Suzette. I had earned it for her, and on her I spent it. The last—the last expense she ever cost me.

I believe I ought to end here (said the old Frenchwoman apologetically), for I promised the story should be of her, not of me. But perhaps the society may wish to know a little how I got on after her death. Messieurs, how must we all get on when hunger knocks at the door, and we have no bread? Though I had lost the child, I couldn't starve, or let the man starve. And for me there was only one work; only the rouge and the spangles, the music and the jests of the clown, that made my very soul turn to death when I thought of them.

The morning I went to the circus and asked to be taken on again—I had been away for two months now—the director, for a minute, didn't know me. 'My poor girl,' he said, 'Pauline is back, better liked by the public than ever, and the troupe is full. As things are at present I couldn't give

you a sou more than your old salary.'

'Give me bread,' I said sullenly. 'What do I want but bread for two mouths now?'

The story of the next two years can be told in as many words. I worked, despaired, starved; the man despairing, starving, never working with me. I had no pleasure, no object: nothing but to get bread for him and for me. He was not a bad man by nature, only idle, fond of drink and companions, sickly too, as I have said,—'true temperament of an artiste,' he used to say of himself; and when I did not bring back money enough—*Allez*, it is not of that I meant to speak. After a while—how I could never tell—my load seemed to begin to lighten; I thought over all the other women I knew; I thought over myself: and felt that, for Suzette, it was well. Neither work, nor hunger, nor bitter word, nor cruel blow for Suzette. And then, little by little, my heart, I suppose, grew soft again, for I could look a bit over her poor clothes (so poor, thank God, I had had no temptation to take them to the Piété), could go and visit the woman I told you of, could even bear to hear how she looked, and of all her little ways and baby chatter on the journey. So, I say, went by a couple of years. At the end of this time rope-dancing, which had been out of fashion in Paris since Salome's accident at the Hippodrome, began to come up, and our director, always ready to forestal the public taste, had to look about him for performers. As a child I had been brought up among a troupe of *funambules*. I had, indeed, made my appearance with credit on the rope, in the very year when Salome's death put these performances, for a time, out of favour. 'Give me a month's leave, Monsieur le Directeur,' I



said, 'and you will not have far to look for a first subject. Give me a month to practise, and I will draw fuller houses for you on the rope than I have ever done yet in the ring.' And I kept my word.

'You have missed your vocation hitherto, my poor Rosa,' my husband said, on the day after my first appearance. He was always pleased—the man's heart was in its place—at any success I got. 'Go on diligently at your new work, and in time I shall see you in a pretty apartment on the Boulevard des Italiens yet.'

Messieurs, I never had an apartment on the Boulevard des Italiens; but for eight years I held my place in Paris as rope-dancer of the first order; those were the years during which, as the world knows, I was celebrated, and, in spite of the man's expenses, drove in my carriage and wore silks and cachemires like the rest. I had a salary out of which, if I had saved, I might have provided well for my old age. But I did not save. To save, it may be, one needs an object, a hope: and I had none. At that time I couldn't have gone on the journey I am taking now; at that time Suzette was—not forgotten—but put away—put far away—out of my life. All I wanted was to live fast, fast, and die! And at nine-and-thirty I had grown old. There was no outward falling-off in my dancing as yet; but I knew well enough myself that my strength was sinking. Sometimes in the middle of my performance, the circus ringing with applause at my courage, I would feel my heart stand still, a mist would swim before my eyes, my limbs tremble, and it was only by a miracle of endurance that I could reach the descent without my weakness being seen. At other times a horrible cowardice, a sort of cold shuddering terror, would

overcome me when the moment arrived for me to come out before the footlights. I was breaking down, in short; worn out, spent, and I knew it.

One night—it was Christmas time again, just the anniversary of her death—I told the man what I felt, and that I did not think I should ever get through that night's representation.

'Then to-morrow will see me ruined,' he said. 'I have debts of honour—for he had got to dress and talk, yes, and gamble like a gentleman—that you know nothing of, and, of course, I have looked to your salary to pay them. If you choose to break down in your engagement now, I swear to you I will put an end to myself to-morrow morning. Now do as you like.' Then he went out and left me.

I ordered my carriage. I drove to the theatre and dressed. When the moment came for me to appear I could scarcely move. All my right side felt numbed. Strange lurid lights rose and fell before my eyes. 'Look, then, at the old Rosa!' I heard one of the younger women whisper to another. 'She is breaking fast: in another three months say if the little Clotilde will not be in her shoes?'

'Madame,' said one of the call-men, coming to me hastily, 'you have been waited for five minutes. The public grows impatient.'

And upon that I gathered together what strength I had, and with one supreme effort came out before the footlights. The house received me well; to the last I was treated by the public as a favourite, and the applause seemed to bring back my courage. I made my salutation, ran quickly up the ascent, and in another second was midway upon the rope. My nerve seemed returning to me more and more. I gave a bound, returning

to the famous—yes, messieurs, the famous attitude for which I was known in my *Joan of Arc*, the piece chosen for to-night, and the applause redoubled. It was an unusually full house, the boxes at this Christmas time crowded with children; and as my performance went on, their shrill bravas, the clapping of their small hands seemed to give me redoubled heart. Well, I went through it bravely. In the papers afterwards (I have them still—could show them to any of the company in Paris) it was said I had never won a greater success than on this night, and at last the final coronation scene arrived. I had not broken down, then, I felt with a sort of wonder. There was the same numbed feeling about me still. My heart beat so, that I could hear its throbs. The faces of the spectators were livid, the gaslight was blood-coloured to me. But I had not broken down! Whatever was coming, I had saved my reputation, had met with no public disgrace, had held my place as an artiste to the last. I walked up to the highest point of the rope, and was just putting out my hands as if in the act of crowning the kneeling king, when suddenly a child's voice, piercing clear through the silence of the house, cried out, 'Mamma, mamma!'

I looked round to the side from whence the voice came, and in a stage-box on the upper tier I saw a girl, eight or nine years of age, with blonde hair falling round her neck, and little arms outstretched. The child, half in admiration, half in terror, was calling to her own mother, of course, but I—messieurs, does the heart stop to reason? Suzette would have been a woman grown if she had lived; but to me she had always kept the same age still, and I thought she

was standing before me, in white, as they dressed her at the London theatre, with arms outheld, crying to me to save her, and I could not!

'Rosa la Champi stood for a full minute motionless,' the papers described it; for myself, I remember nothing; 'then sank, doubled up, *brisée*, apparently lifeless on the rope. There was a horrible silence throughout the house. Among those four thousand spectators not one but held his breath in anticipation of what was to follow—a horrible silence: but at last, mechanically holding to the rope with her last strength, Rosa was seen to crawl, inch by inch, towards the side of the stage, and after another breathless minute was safe—safe, but with a face of death, speechless, awfully still, in the arms of the people, who waited for her upon the ladder.'

When I came back to consciousness, many days later, I was in bed in my lodgings. I had had a stroke of paralysis—slight, said the surgeon; I was in no danger, might live for forty years, but a little crippled, as the society sees me—I could never work again. The man was gone. He drew what was due to us on the morning after I was taken ill, and wrote me a letter from some foreign town—Dunkirk, I believe—but all that part of my life grows blotted when I try to think of it. His debts, he said, forced him away out of Paris, and in my state of health he would never return to cause me trouble or expense. So, from that day till this, I have been quite alone.

Messieurs, I have found the world good to me. As I began to recover, when I looked in my glass and knew (my carriage, horses, jewels, all I possessed, sold to pay my creditors) I was an old woman and helpless, I had one fear—shall I tell it?—that my

life would end in selling play-bills at the theatre-doors amidst the rain and cold and snow of the winter nights. I was saved from this. Our director and his friends used their influence for me, and after a time I got to be box-keeper on the second tier of the Opéra Comique. I have held my place seven years, and during these years—always hoping to make one journey before I died—have saved eighty francs. As he was coming out of his box the other night, M. Losada, the rich banker of whom

the company has heard, put a forty-franc piece in my hand, 'Enjoy your Christmas holiday, my poor old Rosa,' he said.

Forty and eighty make a hundred and twenty: enough, I hear, to take me to London and back, and keep me there for a day. I have the number of the grave and the name of the cemetery, just as M. Rix wrote them for me nineteen years ago. And so, mes-sieurs and mesdames, I am spending my holiday. I am going to visit Suzette—at last.

There was a dead silence after the old Frenchwoman ceased speaking. Several of the ladies were crying, and the men, notably the gentleman in the fur-coat, looked very serious. The company was evidently depressed; and seeing this, a tall thin man with a sharp pointed face and pointed moustaches, and a quick irritable manner, lifted his eyebrows at me interrogatively, as much as to say, 'this sort of thing must be put a stop to!' and at once exclaimed, 'I'll tell you a story!'

### *THE STORY OF A MAN IN A HURRY.*

THERE are some people who are always in a hurry. They seem to have been born in a whirlwind—to live a zigzag kind of existence, like so many flashes of lightning, and to die at last with a Bang, like a Powder Magazine. They are fifty years of age before they know where they are. You have them one day rapid young bachelors, and the next (as it seems to you) they rush up to you and beg you to come to the christening of their third boy. They are in such a hurry to grow rich that they sometimes find they have rushed into Basinghall-street instead of the Bank. They are in such haste to squander their money, that the uncles and aunts who are continually leaving them legacies to retrieve their fortunes have the very greatest difficulty in keeping up with them. People in

a hurry are the only persons who should properly go into Parliament, manage theatres, or become directors of public companies. Your M.P. in a hurry devours blue-books at breakfast; dictates letters until it is time to go down to the House and sit upon committees; receives deputations till lunch-time; speechifies at public meetings all the afternoon; rushes down to the club and black-balls his enemies; writes an article for the *Quarter-day Review* while he is washing his hands; goes down to the House again, and catches the Speaker's eye until three in the morning, and then goes home to dream till seven A.M. of being President of the Board of Trade. Your Manager in a hurry is always going to Paris. When it is not Paris, it is Vienna or Madrid. 'Off by the eight-o'clock train,' he says

to you hurriedly as he swallows scalding soup at the Albion. 'I must see the new piece at the Gymnase.' 'Just back from Vienna,' he cries to you as he scuds by in a fleet hansom. 'Brought over Madame Kettelholdstein, who sings through the nape of her neck. Think she'll draw? Fought a duel with her brother-in-law, pensioned off her gambling husband; but I *would* have her.' The Manager in a hurry writes his own pieces, and has been known to assist in scoring the music, and dabbing gold-leaf on the final flats of the transformation scene. He can find time, however, to give evidence before the Parliamentary Committee on the Education of Call-boys and the Morals of Property-men (on which occasion he is examined by the M.P. in a hurry); to entertain the Earl of Footlights, Sir John Skyborder, and Captain Wing of the Guards, at supper; and to turn his lawful wife out of doors, and go off to Bognor with Miss Bobo, the singing chambermaid. As to your Company Director, there is no end to his hurry. He must always have fifty-five thousand pounds before half-past two. He is off to Aberdeen to secure the Marquis of Tullochgorum as chairman for his new spec. He has an appointment with the governor of the Bank of England at three. He has to meet the Crédit Mobilier (come over in a hurry to meet *him*) at four. He dines with Salamanca to-night. He has promised to take Emile Periere to the Alhambra afterwards. And to-morrow he is pledged to Rothschild for a quiet afternoon at the Star and Garter. Earlier in the day he partook of a turtle-lunch at the Cannon-street Hotel, to settle about that feed at the Trafalgar with the Directors of the Great Dom-Daniel Railway. Of course he goes every day to half-a-dozen board-meetings; and equally of course, in addition to

his directorship he is a banker, or a brewer, or an ironmaster, or a calico-printer, and must devote at least three hours every day to signing cheques and blowing up his clerks. Very often too he is a 'pious party,' and hurries from the turtle-lunch or the board-room to the annual meeting of the Penitent Applewomen's Society, held at the Penitents' Home in a back street off Clare Market, where he duly joins in a hymn, and 'flops'—as the author of the *Tale of Two Cities* has it—and listens with much edification to a speech from the Bishop of Minnesota (the last American lion of the episcopal breed), who eloquently implies that for applewomen to be depraved, starving, and penitent, is, in view of the praiseworthy exertions of the Society, rather a Blessed Thing than otherwise. The oddest thing about all these people in a hurry is that the M.P. is passionately fond of writing poetry in the *ottava rima* (which he publishes under the name of 'Florio'); that the Manager has a craze for collecting butterflies and old china; and that the Director gives up every Wednesday to the culture of roses at his villa at Streatham.

The first Napoleon was a man in a hurry. He had scarcely put his boots on to conquer the world when he found himself at St. Helena, having conquered the world and lost it, and without any boots at all. Lord Brougham has been in a hurry for ninety years. I dare say that the good old sage esteems it but yesterday when he pleaded for Queen Caroline (writing a treatise on the polarisation of light meanwhile); when, as counsel for the defence, and with the assistance of a washhand-basin full of Madeira, he talked a judge at York assizes blind, deaf, and mad; and when, as chairman of the Beefsteak Club, he fined Sir James Macintosh a rump and a

D

dozen for asking for mashed potatoes in lieu of the traditional 'ball of flour.' There is another man in a hurry too, whom I should properly have associated with directors, managers, and M.P.'s. This is the Engineer-Contractor. Save us! what a hurry he is always in! The Nishni-Novgorod Waterworks are his. He had the yellow fever at Panama, on his way to Paraguay to survey the line for the Grand Amazon and Pampas Trunk Railway. He made the tunnel through Chimborazo. The Smoke-ton-cum-Sewer colour-printing works are his. The Little Mudlark Docks would have been nothing without him. The Portugal, Basinghall, and Whitecross-street Railway owe him ten millions sterling. He has smelting-works at Merthyr Tydvil. He is the patentee of the new bottle-jack locomotive for summit railways. Pernambuco was lit with gas by him. The Emperor Prester John made him a commander of the order of the Bilboes for constructing a complete system of sewerage in the capital of Coccagne. He has got the concession for eight new boulevards in Paris. He wants to run the Overland Mail through Camberwell, the Saxon Switzerland, the Valley of Andozz, and the Gulf of Carpentaria. He is certain that he can beat Brindisi by thirty-seven minutes if that route be adopted. Bismarck thinks everything of him. He hobs-and-nobs with Beust. He lends Victor Emmanuel money. Queen Isabella is supposed to regard him with eyes not wholly unfavourable; and it is certain that he built the new nursery at La Granja, and that he furnished all the mules for the royal Spanish stables. With all this he has a decided taste for private theatricals, sings bass in the choir of the Awful Orpheonists (conducted by Lord Rudolph Boreas), smokes fifteen Cabana regalias

every day, and never transacts business save over 'forty-seven' Lafitte or Chateau Yquem from the Aguado bins.

People who are in a hurry live mainly in cabs. The hansom-drivers always touch their hats to them, and speak of them as 'real gentlemen.' One man in a hurry, I know, lives in three portmanteaus. House, lodgings, chambers he has none; but he keeps a valise at the Euston, another at Charing Cross, and another at the Great Northern, and patronises those hotels according to his destination being New York, the Continent, or the manufacturing districts. Another hurried friend of mine belongs to eight clubs, and boasts that he has not read a newspaper or dined at one of them for eight years. At the Golgotha he washes his hands; at the Euphuistic he brushes his hair (they use Atkinson's ivory-backs there, with the club cipher in Gothic); at the United Servants he takes his sherry and bitters; at the Junior Plungers he buys his cigars; at the Drivellers he uses the club snuff-box; at the Antediluvian he calls for his letters; at the Stoics he leaves his umbrella; at the Gnostics he has his boots cleaned; and at the Anabaptists he sometimes takes a sardine-sandwich. This is the good fellow who goes to so many public dinners, is a tremendous hand at Freemasonry, is governor of so many charitable corporations, and was specially invited by Sir Stafford Northcote to the India-House Ball in consequence of his well-earned fame as a 'dancing man.'

I have been in a hurry myself since the reign of King George IV. I never caught anything that I rushed after, and my friend the Tortoise (who passed the winning-post comfortably ten years since) is looking back at me scornfully, as I puff and pant along. I am in such a hurry, that I wish this story



were well over ; but it shall be soon, I promise you.

One of the busiest, most desperately hurried beings I ever knew was my good friend Peter Tarleton, of New York. We used to call him 'High-pressure Pete,' and jokes connecting him with greased lightning were frequently made. He was in such a hurry, that he was never able to give a perfectly satisfactory account of his birth, his belongings, or his avocations. The first was dubious. Some people said he was from Rhode Island ; others that he hailed from New Jersey ; others that he was born off the banks of Newfoundland in an emigrant-ship bound from Falmouth to Boston. As to his belongings, he owned that when he arrived home one evening, Mrs. Tarleton asked him to take a chair and wait a little, as her husband was from home, but would be back soon ; and he was fain to defer to Colonel Boss-gigg, who corrected him when he said he had four children. The colonel insisted that he had five ; and Pete shrugged his shoulders and remarked that perhaps the colonel was right. Concerning his business nor he nor anyone else seemed precisely to know what it was. It had something to do with ships ; but if he was a ship-builder, or a ship-owner, or a ship-broker, why should his counting-house always be littered with fragments of felspar and samples of buckwheat ? Perhaps he was a shipper. At all events he was very wealthy, and made a very good use of his wealth. But he was always in a hurry. He had always something to do at Chicago in connection with grain-elevators. When you took your sleeping-car ticket from Baltimore to Washington, the chances were two to one that Pete Tarleton burst in upon you at Annapolis junction, hot from an interview he had just had with the President at the White House,

or furious at the obstinacy of the Secretary of the Navy in refusing to purchase his new rifled cannon. He was one of the most active members of the New-York Century Club, and would be backed to eat more stewed oysters and drink more rum-punches at a sitting than the oldest Centenerarian. He was the principal patron of Gus M'Gee, the celebrated trotting-match wagoner, and had a half-share in the equally celebrated trotting mare Cornelia Candy. He defrayed the expenses of Miss Philomela Coocoo's—the great native prima-donna—musical education in Europe, and brought her out at the New-York Academy of Music. He built Adullam Chapel, where Rev. Doctor Caveley so edifyingly holds forth. He went moose-hunting in the Adirondacks, and then had that famous fight with the bear which ended in the bear having so very much the worst of it. He was half starved in a journey across the Rocky Mountains, and uttered no very vehement disclaimer when twitted with having scalped the chief Big P, after an unsuccessful attack of the Mogonepack Indians on the stage-coach between Washoe and Sacramento city. He played heavily, lived largely, drank—well, he was a convivial soul ; ran his clipper Christabel at Cowes, and beat the pride of the English Royal Yacht squadron ; had twice served his country in the Lower House of Congress, and had once stumped his state for Governor. Indeed, I have heard him called 'Governor' Tarleton, although he had never filled that high office. His intimates generally addressed him as 'Judge,' and by his clubs he was known as 'General.'

It was about five years ago that Mrs. Tarleton, as lazy and languid a little lady as her husband was bustling and energetic, elected to reside for a season with her four children in Europe. She fixed on the pretty

Baths of St. Moritz in the Grisons as a summer residence, and on Nice as a winter abode. This decision on the part of his wife made Peter Tarleton in a greater hurry than ever. He escorted his family to Europe per Cunard ship *Scotia*, Commodore Judkins in command, in May; settled Mrs. T. and the olive-branches down, or rather up, at St. Moritz (which is the highest watering-place in Europe); and then took a hurried tour through Italy, bolting from Trieste into Styria, to see the grottoes at Adelsberg, which he declared were 'very small potatoes' to the Mammoth Cave in Kentucky; and then returning through the Tyrol, down to the Adriatic coast again, and paying a flying visit to the Roman amphitheatre at Pola. He was coming back from Tuscany shortly after this, when I met him at the railway terminus at Bologna. He was in one train, and I was in another, and from the window of his carriage he shouted out an inquiry as to where he could procure any good pictures by the old masters, explaining that he had bought a 'power of frames' at Florence.

Then Peter Tarleton went back in a hurry to New York, ran up to Nevada Territory to look after some copper-mines he had there, and turning north-east in his way home inspected some water-privileges he possessed in the State of Michigan. He had promised to rejoin Mrs. Tarleton at Nice by the beginning of November; and on the fifteenth of October, having been entertained by a section of his innumerable friends at a grand banquet at Delmonico's, and having given them a return 'stag-party' at his house in Madison-square, he 'locked up,' and transported himself on board the Cunard steamer *Persia*, Captain Lott commanding, bound for Queenstown, Ireland. Now, 'locking up' is a process well-nigh pe-

culiar to the States. In Europe, when a family goes abroad, the plate is sent to Coutts's, the chandeliers are shrouded in brown holland, the stair-carpets are taken up, the furniture is covered, the picture-frames are yellow-gauzed, and a couple of servants on board-wages, or at least a policeman and his wife, are left to take care of the mansion. The Americans are in far too great a hurry to adopt this course. Sometimes a faithful old negro is left in possession; but in a great number of instances the valuables are banked, the fastenings of the doors and windows are carefully looked to, and the house is 'locked up,' and left to the care of the law, the neighbours, and a kind Providence, until the owner comes back. This is what Pete Tarleton did. He went over every room in his house, examined every chain, staple, and bar, and then—like the gentleman in the *Sketches by Boz*—'locked the door, and bolted himself.'

A happy winter in Nice, a happier winter in Naples, a charming summer season in Paris, and an agreeable autumn in England, and Pete Tarleton found that he had been a whole year absent from the States, and that he really must go back in a hurry to look after at least five hundred things which required his attention. He left Mrs. Tarleton and the children this time at Pau, in the Pyrenees, and rushing across France to London and Liverpool, steamed across to Boston per Cunard steamer *China*, Captain Anderson commanding. He was soon in New York and at his house in Madison-square. No thieves had attempted to blow open his locks with gunpowder, no damage had been done by the moths to his crimson-satin damask drawing-room suite. Everything was in apple-pie order, but—

Ah! there is much in a 'but'—

much more even than in an 'if.' That 'stag-party' the night before he left New York had been a very gay one. The guests had remained until a very late, or rather early, hour; and at six A.M. Pete Tarleton, after a refreshing draught of Saratoga-water, had cast himself into a hackney-coach, *en route* for Jersey city, where the steamer lay. But, carefully as he had 'locked up,' he had overlooked one little thing.

In the back drawing-room there was a magnificent eight-branched gas chandelier, a *chef-d'œuvre* by Dobson of St. James's-street, London. In the back study there were two large pillar gas candlesticks with gutta percha pipes. *And both in the back drawing-room and the back study, and from the very main itself, Pete Tarleton had forgotten to turn off the gas.*

'Whew!' whistled the man in a hurry, 'it's been burning for twelve months. There'll be a pretty bill to pay for *this*.'

'They don't cut off your gas in New York if they know you can pay. You can remain in Europe as many years as you choose, and die there if you like; and if you have 'locked up' your house and left the gas burning there, it may continue to burn, and welcome, and the company will send in the bill to your executors. The collector of the company waited on Pete Tarleton. I forget how many hundreds of dollars he had to pay. Some people declared that he was mulct in thousands, but I know the thing was arranged. I think he took some shares in the company, or threatened to start a new one, and 'bust-up' the old association if they declined to reduce their claim, and I am certain that there was another grand banquet at Delmonico's to celebrate the final and amicable settlement of the affair.

Pete was in too great a hurry to think much of the matter when it

was once over. It was about this time that he went in for the Utica, Buffalo, and Lake Memphremagog Railway, and went up to St. Catherine's springs in Canada—duelling being prohibited in the State of New York—to fight Judge Jabers. The judge being satisfactorily winged, and the erst combatants (after Jabers' convalescence) reconciled at a grand feast at the Maison Dorée, and another spring having commenced, Pete set out for Europe once more, per Cunard steamer Arabia, Captain Cook, to rejoin Mrs. Tarleton and the family at Pau in the Pyrenees. He took the precaution, this time, to turn off all the gas-burners in his house, and, instead of 'locking up,' left his residence in the care of his aunt Tabitha. Arrived in due time at Pau, he removed his household gods to Paris, and leaving them at a charming little villa in the Champs Elysées, ran over to England to see some English capitalists who were disposed to bite at the Utica, Buffalo, and Lake Memphremagog scheme. He was to return in a fortnight, and was intrusted by Mrs. Tarleton with a multiplicity of commissions, mostly connected with such articles of feminine gear as ladies think can be better purchased in London than in Paris. Pete, the most devoted of husbands (as the majority of his countrymen are), gave most of the time he could spare from the Memphremagog business to rushing about from Lewis and Allenby's to Whitelock's, from Grant and Gask's to Farmer and Rogers', from Harvey Nichol's to Howell and James's. He was always in a cab; he was overwhelmed with parcels; he very often lost them; but he had plenty of money, and made good on the morrow the losses of the eve.

It was on the ninth day of his stay that this most hurried of men

drove up in a hansom to Swan and Edgar's, jumped out at the Regent-street entrance, and immediately bought goods to the amount of thirty-seven pounds ten. Just as he was signing a cheque for the amount, a hand was laid on his shoulder, and, turning round, he beheld his old friend and business colleague John C. Huff.

'Have you heard the news?' Huff asked, almost breathless.

'What news?' answered Pete.

'The Memphremagog's gone to smash; the managing director's off to Texas; the secretary's in the Tombs for embezzlement. The *Herald* insists that all the directors shall be indicted for fraud. Why didn't you go to Peabody's for your letters this morning? There are a hundred and fifty-six waiting for you from last mail. We're in for two millions if we don't go back at once. I've a cab at the door. We've just time to take the express from Euston, and catch the China at Queenstown.'

'I'm on,' cried the man in a hurry; and he rushed into a four-wheeled cab which was standing at the Piccadilly entrance of Messrs. Swan and Edgar's colossal establishment.

'But the parcel, sir?' exclaimed Messrs. S. and E.'s gentlemanly assistant, waving the cheque at the retreating pair.

'D—n your parcel?' cried Mr. John C. Huff; 'London and North-Western Terminus, cabby.' And away they drove.

The Utica, Buffalo, and Lake Memphremagog had indeed gone to smash; but when Pete Tarleton reached New York he found the matter not quite so serious as he anticipated. Things were settled, somehow; and just about this time he 'struck oil' in Pennsylvania, and started Eight Petroleum Companies. After twelve months' hurried speculation, Pete remem-

bered that he had left Mrs. Tarleton waiting for him in the Avenue Marigny; so back he went to Europe per Cunard steamer Persia, Captain Lott commanding, brought his wife and family to England, and settled down for a time at the Langham.

On the second morning after his arrival, one of the waiters told him that a man was waiting to see him in the hall.

'What's his name?' asked Pete.

'He says his name's Two Thousand and Five,' replied the waiter dubiously; 'he smells very strong of liquor.'

The man in a hurry went into the hall, and was confronted by a personage with a red face, a redder comforter round his neck, a battered white hat, one eye, a metal badge on his manly breast, and a wisp of straw sticking out of his left coat-pocket.

'This is a bad business, master,' quoth the red-faced man.

'What do you mean?'

'I mean,' quoth he of the one eye, raising his voice to concert pitch; 'I mean as 'ow I wants my rights. I druv you in my cab from Hold Broad-street to Swan and Hedgar's; that's two shillin'. I'll give yer that in. You told me to wait. I've bin a vaitin' hever since. That's a twelmonth come five o'clock to-day. I've bin' to a hactewerry, and he's made out the bill, at sixpence for hevery quarter of an 'our I've waited. And I'll 'ave my rights, if there's lor in the land.'

He presented a scrap of paper, the writing on which ran thus:

Mr. Tarleton [cabby had found out our hurried friend's name from the assistant at Swan and Edgar's]

to

John Jiggerstaff, No. 2005.

To hire of cab 2005 waiting at Messrs. Swan and Edgar's from 24th October 186— to 24th October

186—, thirty-five thousand and sixty-three quarter-hours, at sixpence each quarter . . . £876 11 6

The man in a hurry was for a moment staggered, but he speedily recovered his equanimity. He was equal to any emergency.

'Here's a ten-pound note,' he said, 'and go to the devil.'

Two Thousand and Five took the note with a grin, and immediately afterwards took up a fare from the Langham, and went—who knows whither? *Sait-on où l'on va?*

'Well,' remarked Pete Tarleton as he walked upstairs to Mrs. Tarleton and the family, 'I call *that* Burning the Candle at both Ends, anyhow.'

When the Man in a Hurry had finished his story, he was evidently in a hurry for someone else to begin. 'Must be kept up,' he said, to the quiet man sitting next him—a barrister probably, or one 'well up' in a government office—'it must be kept up, or we shall all get flat again.' The gentleman addressed smiled at the speaker's excited manner, and seemed inclined to let the matter drop; but the solicitor assured him in the most chairman-like tones that it was 'his turn,' and thus urged, he consented, as he said, to try and amuse the company with an adventure which had happened to him, and which he would call

### THE STORY OF SALOME.

A FEW years ago, no matter how many, I, Harcourt Blunt, was travelling with my friend Coventry Turnour, and it was on the steps of our hotel that I received from him the announcement—he sent one to me—that he was again in love.

'I tell you, Blunt,' said my fellow-traveller, 'she's the loveliest creature I ever beheld in my life.'

I laughed outright.

'My dear fellow,' I replied, 'you've so often seen the loveliest creature you ever beheld in your life.'

'Ay, but I am in earnest now for the first time.'

'And you have so often been in earnest for the first time! Remember the innkeeper's daughter at Cologne.'

'A pretty housemaid, whom no

training could have made presentable.'

'Then there was the beautiful American at Interlachen.'

'Yes; but—'

'And the bella Marchesa at Prince Torlonia's ball.'

'Not one of them worthy to be named in the same breath with my imperial Venetian. Come with me to the Merceria and be convinced. By taking a gondola to St. Mark's Place we shall be there in a quarter of an hour.'

I went, and he raved of his new flame all the way. She was a Jewess—he would convert her. Her father kept a shop in the Merceria—what of that? He dealt only in costliest Oriental merchandise, and was as rich as a Rothschild. As for any probable injury to his own prospects,

why need he hesitate on that account? What were 'prospects' when weighed against the happiness of one's whole life? Besides, he was not ambitious. He didn't care to go into Parliament. If his uncle Sir Geoffrey cut him off with a shilling, what then? He had a moderate independence of which no one living could deprive him, and what more could any reasonable man desire?

I listened, smiled, and was silent. I knew Coventry Turnour too well to attach the smallest degree of importance to anything that he might say or do in a matter of this kind. To be distractedly in love was his normal condition. We had been friends from boyhood; and since the time when he used to cherish a hopeless attachment to the young lady behind the counter of the tart-shop at Harrow, I had never known him 'fancy-free' for more than a few weeks at a time. He had gone through every phase of no less than three *grandes passions* during the five months that we had now been travelling together; and having left Rome about eleven weeks before with every hope laid waste, and a heart so broken that it could never by any possibility be put together again, he was now, according to the natural course of events, just ready to fall in love again.

We landed at the *traghetto* San Marco. It was a cloudless morning towards the middle of April, just ten years ago. The ducal palace glowed in the hot sunshine; the boatmen were clustered, gossiping, about the Molo; the orange-vendors were busy under the arches of the piazzetta; the *fâneurs* were already eating ices and smoking cigarettes outside the cafés. There was an Austrian military band, strapped, buckled, moustachioed, and white-

coated, playing just in front of St. Mark's; and the shadow of the great bell-tower slept all across the square.

Passing under the low round archway leading to the Merceria, we plunged at once into that cool labyrinth of narrow, intricate, and picturesque streets, where the sun never penetrates—where no wheels are heard, and no beast of burden is seen—where every house is a shop, and every shop-front is open to the ground, as in an Oriental bazaar—where the upper balconies seem almost to meet overhead, and are separated by only a strip of burning sky—and where more than three people cannot march abreast in any part. Pushing our way as best we might through the motley crowd that here chatters, cheapens, buys, sells, and perpetually bustles to and fro, we came presently to a shop for the sale of Eastern goods. A few glass jars filled with spices, and some pieces of stuff, untidily strewn the counter next the street; but within, dark and narrow though it seemed, the place was crammed with costliest merchandise. Cases of gorgeous Oriental jewelry, embroideries and fringes of massive gold and silver bullion, precious drugs and spices, exquisite toys in filigree, miracles of carving in ivory, sandal-wood, and amber, jewelled yataghans, scimitars of state rich with 'barbaric pearl and gold,' bales of Cashmere shawls, China silks, India muslins, gauzes, and the like, filled every inch of available space from floor to ceiling, leaving only a narrow lane from the door to the counter, and a still narrower passage to the rooms beyond the shop.

We went in. A young woman, who was sitting reading on a low seat behind the counter, laid aside her book, and rose slowly. She was dressed wholly in black. I cannot







describe the fashion of her garments. I only know that they fell about her in long, soft, trailing folds, leaving a narrow band of fine cambric visible at the throat and wrists; and that, however graceful and unusual this dress may have been, I scarcely observed it, so entirely was I taken up with admiration of her beauty.

For she was indeed very beautiful—beautiful in a way that I had not anticipated. Coventry Turnour, with all his enthusiasm, had failed to do her justice. He had raved of her eyes—her large, lustrous, melancholy eyes,—of the transparent paleness of her complexion, of the faultless delicacy of her features; but he had not prepared me for the unconscious dignity, the perfect nobleness and refinement, that informed her every look and gesture. My friend requested to see a bracelet at which he had been looking the day before. Proud, stately, silent, she unlocked the case in which it was kept, and laid it before him on the counter. He asked permission to take it over to the light. She bent her head, but answered not a word. It was like being waited upon by a young empress.

Turnour took the bracelet to the door and affected to examine it. It consisted of a double row of gold coins linked together at intervals by a bean-shaped ornament, studded with pink coral and diamonds. Coming back into the shop he asked me if I thought it would please his sister, to whom he had promised a remembrance of Venice.

‘It is a pretty trifle,’ I replied; ‘but surely a remembrance of Venice should be of Venetian manufacture. This, I suppose, is Turkish.’

The beautiful Jewess looked up. We spoke in English; but she understood, and replied:

‘*E Graco, signora?*’ she said coldly.

At this moment an old man came suddenly forward from some dark counting-house at the back—a grizzled, bearded, eager-eyed Shylock, with a pen behind his ear.

‘Go in, Salome—go in, my daughter,’ he said hurriedly. ‘I will serve these gentlemen.’

She lifted her eyes to his for one moment—then moved silently away, and vanished in the gloom of the room beyond.

We saw her no more. We lingered awhile, looking over the contents of the jewel-cases; but in vain. Then Turnour bought his bracelet, and we went out again into the narrow streets, and back to the open daylight of the Gran Piazza.

‘Well,’ he said breathlessly, ‘what do you think of her?’

‘She is very lovely.’

‘Lovelier than you expected?’

‘Much lovelier. But—’

‘But what?’

‘The sooner you succeed in forgetting her, the better.’

He vowed, of course, that he never would and never could forget her. He would hear of no incompatibilities, listen to no objections, believe in no obstacles. That the beautiful Salome was herself not only unconscious of his passion and indifferent to his person, but ignorant of his very name and station, were facts not even to be admitted on the list of difficulties. Finding him thus deaf to reason, I said no more.

It was all over, however, before the week was out.

‘Look here, Blunt,’ he said, coming up to me one morning in the coffee-room of our hotel just as I was sitting down to answer a pile of home-letters; ‘would you like to go on to Trieste to-morrow? There, don’t look at me like that—you can guess how it is with

me. I was a fool ever to suppose she would care for me—a stranger, a foreigner, a Christian. Well, I'm horribly out of sorts, anyhow—and—and I wish I was a thousand miles off at this moment!

\* \* \* \* \*

We travelled on together to Athens, and there parted, Turnour being bound for England, and I for the East. My own tour lasted many months longer. I went first to Egypt and the Holy Land; then joined an exploring party on the Euphrates; and at length, after just twelve months of Oriental life, found myself back again at Trieste about the middle of April in the year following that during which occurred the events I have just narrated. There I found that batch of letters and papers to which I had been looking forward for many weeks past; and amongst the former, one from Coventry Turnour. This time he was not only irrecoverably in love, but on the eve of matrimony. The letter was rapturous and extravagant enough. The writer was the happiest of men; his destined bride the loveliest and most amiable of her sex; the future a paradise; the past a melancholy series of mistakes. As for love, he had never, of course, known what it was till now.

And what of the beautiful Salome?

Not one word of her from beginning to end. He had forgotten her as utterly as if she had never existed. And yet how desperately in love and how desperately in despair he was 'one little year ago'! Ah, yes; but then it *was* 'one little year ago;' and who that had ever known Coventry Turnour would expect him to remember *la plus grande des grandes passions* for even half that time?

I slept that night at Trieste, and went on next day to Venice. Somehow, I could not get Turnour and

his love-affairs out of my head. I remembered our visit to the Merceria. I was haunted by the image of the beautiful Jewess. Was she still so lovely? Did she still sit reading in her wonted seat by the open counter, with the gloomy shop reaching away behind, and the cases of rich robes and jewels all around?

An irresistible impulse prompted me to go to the Merceria and see her once again. I went. It had been a busy morning with me, and I did not get there till between three and four o'clock in the afternoon. The place was crowded. I passed up the well-remembered street, looking out on both sides for the gloomy little shop with its unattractive counter; but in vain. When I had gone so far that I thought I must have passed it, I turned back. House by house I retraced my steps to the very entrance, and still could not find it. Then, concluding that I had not gone far enough at first, I turned back again till I reached a spot where several streets diverged. Here I came to a stand-still, for beyond this point I knew I had not passed before.

It was now only too evident that the Jew no longer occupied his former shop in the Merceria, and that my chance of discovering his whereabouts was exceedingly slender. I could not inquire of his successor, because I could not identify the house. I found it impossible even to remember what trades were carried on by his neighbours on either side. I was ignorant of his very name. Convinced, therefore, of the inutility of making any further effort, I gave up the search, and comforted myself by reflecting that my own heart was not made of adamant, and that it was, perhaps, better for my peace not to see the beautiful Salome again. I was destined to see her again, how-

ever, and that ere many days had passed over my head.

A year of more than ordinary fatiguing Eastern travel had left me in need of rest, and I had resolved to allow myself a month's sketching in Venice and its neighbourhood before turning my face homewards. As, therefore, it is manifestly the first object of a sketcher to select his points of view, and as no more luxurious machine than a Venetian gondola was ever invented for the use of man, I proceeded to employ the first days of my stay in endless boatings to and fro: now exploring all manner of canals and canaletti; now rowing out in the direction of Murano; now making for the islands beyond San Pietro Castello, and in the course of these pilgrimages noting down an infinite number of picturesque sites, and smoking an infinite number of cigarettes. It was, I think, about the fourth or fifth day of this pleasant work, when my gondolier proposed to take me as far as the Lido. It wanted about two hours to sunset, and the great sandbank lay not more than three or four miles away; so I gave the word, and in another moment we had changed our route and were gliding farther and farther from Venice at each dip of the oar. Then the long dull distant ridge that had all day bounded the shallow horizon rose gradually above the placid level of the Lagune, assumed a more broken outline, resolved itself into hillocks and hollows of tawny sand, showed here and there a patch of parched grass and tangled brake, and looked like the coasts of some inhospitable desert beyond which no traveller might penetrate. My boatman made straight for a spot where some stakes at the water's edge gave token of a landing-place; and here, though with some difficulty, for the tide was low, ran the gondola

aground. I landed. My first step was among graves.

'*E 'l cimiterio giudaico, signore,*' said my gondolier, with a touch of his cap.

The Jewish cemetery! The *ghetto* of the dead! I remembered now to have read or heard long since how the Venetian Jews, cut off in death as in life from the neighbourhood of their Christian rulers, had been buried from immemorial time upon this desolate waste. I stooped to examine the headstone at my feet. It was but a shattered fragment, crusted over with yellow lichens, and eaten away by the salt sea air. I passed on to the next, and the next. Some were completely matted over with weeds and brambles; some were half-buried in the drifting sand; of some, only a corner remained above the surface. Here and there a name, a date, a fragment of heraldic carving, or part of a Hebrew inscription, was yet legible; but all were more or less broken and effaced.

Wandering on thus among graves and hillocks, ascending at every step, and passing some three or four glassy pools overgrown with gaunt-looking reeds, I presently found that I had reached the central and most elevated part of the Lido, and that I commanded an uninterrupted view on every side. On the one hand lay the broad, silent Lagune bounded by Venice and the Euganean hills—on the other, stealing up in long, lazy folds, and breaking noiselessly against the endless shore, the blue Adriatic. An old man gathering shells on the seaward side, a distant gondola on the Lagune, were the only signs of life for miles around.

Standing on the upper ridge of this narrow barrier, looking upon both waters, and watching the gradual approach of what promised to be a gorgeous sunset, I fell into one of those wandering trains of

thought in which the real and unreal succeed each other as capriciously as in a dream. I remembered how Goethe here conceived his vertebral theory of the skull—how Byron, too lame to walk, kept his horse on the Lido, and here rode daily to and fro—how Shelley loved the wild solitude of the place, wrote of it in *Julian and Maddalo*, listened, perhaps from this very spot, to the mad-house bell on the island of San Giorgio. Then I wondered if Titian had ever come hither from his gloomy house on the other side of Venice, to study the gold and purple of these western skies—if Othello had walked here with Desdemona—if Shylock was buried yonder, and Leah whom he loved ‘when he was a bachelor.’

And then in the midst of my reverie, I came suddenly upon another Jewish cemetery.

Was it indeed another, or but an outlying portion of the first? It was evidently another, and a more modern one. The ground was better kept. The monuments were newer. Such dates as I had succeeded in deciphering on the broken sepulchres lower down were all of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; but the inscriptions upon these bore reference to quite recent interments.

I went on a few steps farther. I stopped to copy a quaint Italian couplet on one tomb—to gather a wild forget-me-not from the foot of another—to put aside a bramble that trailed across a third—and then I became aware for the first time of a lady sitting beside a grave not a dozen yards from the spot on which I stood.

I had believed myself so utterly alone, and was so taken by surprise, that for the first moment I could almost have persuaded myself that she also was ‘of the stuff that dreams are made of.’ She was

dressed from head to foot in the deepest mourning; her face turned from me, looking towards the sunset; her cheek resting in the palm of her hand. The grave by which she sat was obviously recent. The scant herbage round about had been lately disturbed, and the marble headstone looked as if it had not yet undergone a week’s exposure to wind and weather.

Persuaded that she had not observed me, I lingered for an instant looking at her. Something in the grace and sorrow of her attitude, something in the turn of her head and the flow of her sable draperies, arrested my attention. Was she young? I fancied so. Did she mourn a husband?—a lover?—a parent? I glanced towards the headstone. It was covered with Hebrew characters; so that, had I even been nearer, it could have told me nothing.

But I felt that I had no right to stand there, a spectator of her sorrow, an intruder on her privacy. I proceeded to move noiselessly away. At that moment she turned and looked at me.

It was Salome.

Salome, pale and worn as from some deep and wasting grief, but more beautiful, if that could be, than ever. Beautiful, with a still more spiritual beauty than of old; with cheeks so wan and eyes so unutterably bright and solemn, that my very heart seemed to stand still as I looked upon them. For one second I paused, half fancying, half hoping that there was recognition in her glance; then, not daring to look or linger longer, turned away. When I had gone far enough to do so without discourtesy, I stopped and gazed back. She had resumed her former attitude, and was looking over towards Venice and the setting sun. The stone by which she watched was not more motionless.

The sun went down in glory. The last flush faded from the domes and bell-towers of Venice; the western peaks changed from rose to purple, from gold to gray; a scarcely perceptible film of mist became all at once visible upon the surface of the Lagune; and overhead, the first star trembled into light. I waited and watched till the shadows had so deepened that I could no longer distinguish one distant object from another. Was that the spot? Was she still there? Was she moving? Was she gone? I could not tell. The more I looked, the more uncertain I became. Then, fearing to miss my way in the fast-gathering twilight, I struck down towards the water's edge, and made for the point at which I had landed.

I found my gondolier fast asleep, with his head on a cushion, and his bit of gondola-carpet thrown over him for a counterpane. I asked if he had seen any other boat put off from the Lido since I left? He rubbed his eyes, started up, and was awake in a moment.

'*Per Bacco, signore*, I have been asleep,' he said apologetically: 'I have seen nothing.'

'Did you observe any other boat moored hereabouts when we landed?'

'None, signore.'

'And you have seen nothing of a lady in black?'

He laughed and shook his head.

'*Consolatevi, signore*,' he said archly. 'She will come to-morrow.'

Then, finding that I looked grave, he touched his cap, and with a gentle '*Scusate, signore*,' took his place at the stern, and there waited. I bade him row to my hotel; and then, leaning dreamily back in my little dark cabin, I folded my arms, closed my eyes, and thought of Salome.

How lovely she was! How infinitely more lovely than even my

first remembrance of her! How was it that I had not admired her more that day in the Merceria? Was I blind, or had she become indeed more beautiful? It was a sad and strange place in which to meet her again. By whose grave was she watching? By her father's? Yes, surely by her father's. He was an old man when I saw him, and in the course of nature had not long to live. He was dead: hence my unavailing search in the Merceria. He was dead. His shop was let to another occupant. His stock-in-trade was sold and dispersed. And Salome—was she left alone? Had she no mother? no brother?—no lover? Would her eyes have had that look of speechless woe in them if she had any very near or dear tie left on earth? Then I thought of Coventry Turnour, and his approaching marriage. Did he ever really love her? I doubted it. 'True love,' saith an old song, 'can ne'er forget;' but he had forgotten, as though the past had been a dream. And yet he was in earnest while it lasted,—would have risked all for her sake, if she would have listened to him. Ah, if she *had* listened to him! And then I remembered that he had never told me the particulars of that affair. Did she herself reject him, or did he lay his suit before her father? And was he rejected only because he was a Christian? I had never cared to ask these things while we were together; but now I would have given the best hunter in my stables to know every minute detail connected with the matter.

Pondering thus, travelling over the same ground again and again, wondering whether she remembered me, whether she was poor, whether she was indeed alone in the world, how long the old man had been dead, and a hundred other things of the same kind,—I



scarcely noticed how the watery miles glided past, or how the night closed in. One question, however, recurred oftener than any other: How was I to see her again?

I arrived at my hotel; I dined at the *table d'hôte*; I strolled out, after dinner, to my favourite café in the piazza; I dropped in for half an hour at the Fenice, and heard one act of an extremely poor opera; I came home restless, uneasy, wakeful; and sitting for hours before my bedroom fire, asked myself the same perpetual question, How was I to see her again?

Fairly tired out at last, I fell asleep in my chair, and when I awoke the sun was shining upon my window.

I started to my feet. I had it now. It flashed upon me, as if it came with the sunlight. I had but to go again to the cemetery, copy the inscription upon the old man's tomb, ask my learned friend Professor Nicolai, of Padua, to translate it for me, and then, once in possession of names and dates, the rest would be easy.

In less than an hour, I was once more on my way to the Lido.

I took a rubbing of the stone. It was the quickest way, and the surest; for I knew that in Hebrew everything depended on the pointing of the characters, and I feared to trust my own untutored skill. This done, I hastened back, wrote my letter to the professor, and despatched both letter and rubbing by the midday train.

The professor was not a prompt man. On the contrary, he was a preëminently slow man; dreamy, indolent, buried in Oriental lore. From any other correspondent one might have looked for a reply in the course of the morrow; but from Nicolai of Padua it would have been folly to expect one under two or three days. And in the mean while? Well, in the

mean while there were churches and palaces to be seen, sketches to be made, letters of introduction to be delivered. It was, at all events, of no use to be impatient.

And yet I was impatient—so impatient that I could neither sketch, nor read, nor sit still for ten minutes together. Possessed by an uncontrollable restlessness, I wandered from gallery to gallery, from palace to palace, from church to church. The imprisonment of even a gondola was irksome to me. I was, as it were, impelled to be moving and doing; and even so, the day seemed endless.

The next was even worse. There was just the possibility of a reply from Padua, and the knowledge of that possibility unsettled me for the day. Having watched and waited for every post from eight to four, I went down to the traghetto of St. Mark's, and was there hailed by my accustomed gondolier.

He touched his cap and waited for orders.

'Where to, signore?' he asked, finding that I remained silent.

'To the Lido.'

It was an irresistible temptation, and I yielded to it; but I yielded in opposition to my judgment. I knew that I ought not to haunt the place. I had resolved that I would not. And yet I went.

Going along, I told myself that I had only come to reconnoitre. It was not unlikely that she might be going to the same spot about the same hour as before; and in that case I might overtake her gondola by the way, or find it moored somewhere along the shore. At all events, I was determined not to land. But we met no gondola beyond San Pietro Castello; saw no sign of one along the shore. The afternoon was far advanced; the sun was near going down; we had the Lagoon and the Lido to ourselves.

My boatman made for the same landing-place, and moored his gondola to the same stake as before. He took it for granted that I meant to land; and I landed. After all, however, it was evident that Salome could not be there, in which case I was guilty of no intrusion. I might stroll in the direction of the cemetery, taking care to avoid her, if she were anywhere about, and keeping well away from that part where I had last seen her. So I broke another resolve, and went up towards the top of the Lido. Again I came to the salt pools and the reeds; again stood with the sea upon my left hand and the Lagoon upon my right, and the endless sandbank reaching on for miles between the two. Yonder lay the new cemetery. Standing thus I overlooked every foot of the ground. I could even distinguish the headstone of which I had taken a rubbing the morning before. There was no living thing in sight. I was, to all appearance, as utterly alone as Enoch Arden on his desert island.

Then I strolled on, a little nearer, and a little nearer still; and then, contrary to all my determinations, I found myself standing upon the very spot, beside the very grave, which I had made up my mind on no account to approach.

The sun was now just going down—had gone down, indeed, behind a bank of golden-edged cumuli—and was flooding earth, sea, and sky with crimson. It was at this hour that I saw her. It was upon this spot that she was sitting. A few scant blades of grass had sprung up here and there upon the grave. Her dress must have touched them as she sat there—her dress; perhaps her hand. I gathered one, and laid it carefully between the leaves of my note-book.

At last I turned to go, and, turning, met her face to face!

She was distant about six yards, and advancing slowly towards the spot on which I was standing. Her head drooped slightly forward; her hands were clasped together; her eyes were fixed upon the ground. It was the attitude of a nun. Startled, confused, scarcely knowing what I did, I took off my hat, and drew aside to let her pass.

She looked up—hesitated—stood still—gazed at me with a strange, steadfast, mournful expression—then dropped her eyes again, passed me without another glance, and resumed her former place and attitude beside her father's grave.

I turned away. I would have given worlds to speak to her; but I had not dared, and the opportunity was gone. Yet I might have spoken! She looked at me—looked at me with so strange and piteous an expression in her eyes—continued looking at me as long as one might have counted five. . . . I might have spoken. I surely might have spoken! And now—ah! now it was impossible. She had fallen into the old thoughtful attitude, with her cheek resting on her hand. Her thoughts were far away. She had forgotten my very presence.

I went back to the shore, more disturbed and uneasy than ever. I spent all the remaining daylight in rowing up and down the margin of the Lido, looking for her gondola—hoping, at all events, to see her put off—to follow her, perhaps, across the waste of waters. But the dusk came quickly on, and then darkness, and I left at last without having seen any farther sign or token of her presence.

Lying awake that night, tossing uneasily upon my bed, and thinking over the incidents of the last

few days, I found myself perpetually recurring to that long, steady, sorrowful gaze which she fixed upon me in the cemetery. The more I thought of it, the more I seemed to feel that there was in it some deeper meaning than I, in my confusion, had observed at the time. It was such a strange look—a look almost of entreaty, of asking for help or sympathy; like the dumb appeal in the eyes of a sick animal. Could this really be? What, after all, more possible than that, left alone in the world—with, perhaps, not a single male relation to advise her—she found herself in some position of present difficulty, and knew not where to turn for help? All this might well be. She had even, perhaps, some instinctive feeling that she might trust me. Ah! if she would indeed trust me. . . .

I had hoped to receive my Paduan letter by the morning delivery; but morning and afternoon went by as before, and still no letter came. As the day began to decline, I was again on my way to the Lido; this time for the purpose, and with the intention, of speaking to her. I landed, and went direct to the cemetery. It had been a dull day. Lagune and sky were both one leaden uniform gray, and a mist hung over Venice.

I saw her from the moment I reached the upper ridge. She was walking slowly to and fro among the graves, like a stately shadow. I had felt confident, somehow, that she would be there; and now, for some reason that I could not have defined for my life, I felt equally confident that she expected me.

Trembling and eager, yet half dreading the moment when she should discover my presence, I hastened on, printing the loose sand at every noiseless step. A few moments more, and I should overtake her, speak to her, hear

the music of her voice—that music which I remembered so well, though a year had gone by since I last heard it. But how should I address her? What had I to say? I knew not. I had no time to think. I could only hurry on till within some ten feet of her trailing garments; stand still when she turned, and uncover before her as if she were a queen.

She paused and looked at me, just as she had paused and looked at me the evening before. With the same sorrowful meaning in her eyes; with even more than the same entreating expression. But she waited for me to speak.

I did speak. I cannot recall what I said; I only know that I faltered something of an apology—mentioned that I had had the honour of meeting her before, many months ago; and, trying to say more—trying to express how thankfully and proudly I would devote myself to any service, however humble, however laborious, I failed both in voice and words, and broke down utterly.

Having come to a stop, I looked up, and found her eyes still fixed upon me.

‘You are a Christian,’ she said.

A trembling came upon me at the first sound of her voice. It was the same voice; distinct, melodious, scarce louder than a whisper—and yet it was not quite the same. There was a melancholy in the music, and, if I may use a word which, after all, fails to express my meaning, a *remoteness*, that fell upon my ear like the plaintive cadence in an autumnal wind.

I bent my head, and answered that I was.

She pointed to the headstone of which I had taken a rubbing a day or two before.

‘A Christian soul lies there,’ she said, ‘laid in earth without one Christian prayer—with He-

brew rites—in a Hebrew sanctuary. Will you, stranger, perform an act of piety towards the dead?

‘The Signora has but to speak,’ I said. ‘All that she wishes shall be done.’

‘Read one prayer over this grave; trace a cross upon this stone.’

‘I will.’

She thanked me with a gesture, slightly bowed her head, drew her outer garment more closely round her, and moved away to a rising ground at some little distance. I was dismissed. I had no excuse for lingering—no right to prolong the interview—no business to remain there one moment longer. So I left her there, nor once looked back till I reached the last point from which I knew I should be able to see her. But when I turned for that last look she was no longer in sight.

I had resolved to speak to her, and this was the result. A stranger interview never, surely, fell to the lot of man! I had said nothing that I meant to say—had learnt nothing that I sought to know. With regard to her circumstances, her place of residence, her very name, I was no wiser than before. And yet I had, perhaps, no reason to be dissatisfied. She had honoured me with her confidence, and intrusted to me a task of some difficulty and importance. It now only remained for me to execute that task as thoroughly and as quickly as possible. That done, I might fairly hope to win some place in her remembrance—by and by, perhaps, in her esteem.

Meanwhile, the old question rose again—whose grave could it be? I had settled this matter so conclusively in my own mind from the first, that I could scarcely believe even now that it was not her father’s. Yet that he should have died a secret convert to Christianity

was incredible. Whose grave could it be? A lover’s? a Christian lover’s? Alas! it might be. Or a sister’s? In either of these cases it was more than probable that Salome was herself a convert. But I had no time to waste in conjecture. I must act, and act promptly.

I hastened back to Venice as fast as my gondolier could row me; and as we went along I promised myself that all her wishes should be carried out before she visited the spot again. To at once secure the services of a clergyman who would go with me to the Lido at early dawn, and there read some portion, at least, of the burial-service; and at the same time to engage a stonemason to cut the cross;—to have all done before she, or anyone, should have approached the place next day, was my especial object. And that object I was resolved to carry out, though I had to search Venice through before I laid my head upon the pillow.

I found my clergyman without difficulty. He was a young man occupying rooms in the same hotel, and on the same floor as myself. I had met him each day at the *table d’hôte*, and conversed with him once or twice in the reading-room. He was a North-countryman, had not long since taken orders, and was both gentlemanly and obliging. He promised in the readiest manner to do all that I required, and to breakfast with me at six next morning, in order that we might reach the cemetery by eight.

To find my stonemason, however, was not so easy; and yet I went to work methodically enough. I began with the Venetian Directory; then copied a list of stonemasons’ names and addresses; then took a gondola *a due rame*, and started upon my voyage of discovery.

E

But a night's voyage of discovery among the intricate back canaletti of Venice is no very easy and no very safe enterprise. Narrow, tortuous, densely populated, often blocked by huge hay, wood, and provision barges, almost wholly unlighted, and so perplexingly alike that no mere novice in Venetian topography need ever hope to distinguish one from another, they baffle the very gondoliers, and are a terra incognita to all but the dwellers therein.

I succeeded, however, in finding three of the places entered on my list. At the first I was told that the workman of whom I was in quest was working by the week somewhere over by Murano, and would not be back again till Saturday night. At the second and third, I found the men at home, supping with their wives and children at the end of the day's work; but neither would consent to undertake my commission. One, after a whispered consultation with his son, declined reluctantly. The other told me plainly that he dared not do it, and that he did not believe I should find a stonemason in Venice who would be bolder than himself.

The Jews, he said, were rich and powerful; no longer an oppressed people; no longer to be insulted even in Venice with impunity. To cut a Christian cross upon a Jewish headstone in the Jewish cemetery, would be 'a sort of sacrilege,' and punishable, no doubt, by the law. This sounded like truth; so, finding that my rowers were by no means confident of their way, and that the canaletti were dark as the catacombs, I prevailed upon the stonemason to sell me a small mallet and a couple of chisels, and made up my mind to commit the sacrilege myself.

With this single exception, all was done next morning as I had

planned to do it. My new acquaintance breakfasted with me, accompanied me to the Lido, read such portions of the burial-service as seemed proper to him, and then, having business in Venice, left me to my task. It was by no means an easy one. To a skilled hand it would have been, perhaps, the work of half-an-hour; but it was my first effort, and rude as the thing was—a mere grooved attempt at a Latin cross, about two inches and a half in length, cut close down at the bottom of the stone, where it could be easily concealed by a little piling of the sand—it took me nearly four hours to complete. While I was at work, the dull gray morning grew duller and grayer; a thick sea fog drove up from the Adriatic, and a low moaning wind came and went like the echo of a distant requiem. More than once I started, believing that she had surprised me there—fancying I saw the passing of a shadow—heard the rustling of a garment—the breathing of a sigh. But no. The mists and the moaning wind deceived me. I was alone.

When at length I got back to my hotel, it was just two o'clock. The hall-porter put a letter into my hand as I passed through. One glance at that crabbed superscription was enough. It was from Padua. I hastened to my room, tore open the envelope, and read these words:

"CARO SIGNORE,—The rubbing you send is neither ancient nor curious, as I fear you suppose it to be. *Altro*; it is of yesterday. It merely records that one Salome, the only and beloved child of a certain Isaac Da Costa, died last autumn on the eighteenth of October, aged twenty-one years, and that by the said Isaac Da Costa this monument is erected to the

memory of her virtues and his grief.

"I pray you, *caro signore*, to receive the assurance of my sincere esteem.

NICOLO NICOLAI.

"Padua, April 27th, 1857."

The letter dropped from my hand. I seemed to have read without understanding it. I picked it up; went through it again, word by word; sat down; rose up; took a turn across the room; felt confused, bewildered, incredulous.

Could there, then, be two Salomes? or was there some radical and extraordinary mistake?

I hesitated; I knew not what to do. Should I go down to the Merceria, and see whether the name of Da Costa was known in the *quartier*? Or find out the registrar of births and deaths for the Jewish district? Or call upon the principal rabbi, and learn from him who this second Salome had been, and in what degree of relationship she stood towards the Salome whom I knew? I decided upon the last course. The chief rabbi's address was easily obtained. He lived in an ancient house on the Giudecca, and there I found him—a grave, stately old man, with a grizzled beard reaching nearly to his waist.

I introduced myself, and stated my business. I came to ask if he could give me any information respecting the late Salome da Costa, who died on the 18th of October last, and was buried on the Lido.

The rabbi replied that he had no doubt he could give me any information I desired, as he had known the lady personally, and was the intimate friend of her father.

"Can you tell me," I asked, "whether she had any dear friend or female relative of the same name—Salome?"

The rabbi shook his head. "I

think not," he said. "I remember no other maiden of that name."

"Pardon me, but I know there was another," I replied. "There was a very beautiful Salome living in the Merceria when I was last in Venice, just this time last year."

"Salome da Costa was very fair," said the rabbi; "and she dwelt with her father in the Merceria. Since her death, he hath removed to the neighbourhood of the Rialto."

"This Salome's father was a dealer in Oriental goods," I said, hastily.

"Isaac da Costa is a dealer in Oriental goods," replied the old man very gently. "We are speaking, my son, of the same persons."

"Impossible!"

He shook his head again.

"But she lives!" I exclaimed, becoming greatly agitated. "She lives. I have seen her. I have spoken to her. I saw her only last evening."

"Nay," he said compassionately, "this is some dream. She of whom you speak is indeed no more."

"I saw her only last evening," I repeated.

"Where did you suppose you beheld her?"

"On the Lido."

"On the Lido?"

"And she spoke to me. I heard her voice—heard it as distinctly as I hear my own at this moment."

The rabbi stroked his beard thoughtfully, and looked at me. "You think you heard her voice!" he ejaculated. "That is strange. What said she?"

I was about to answer. I checked myself—a sudden thought flashed upon me—I trembled from head to foot. "Have you—have you any reason for supposing that she died a Christian?" I faltered.

The old man started, and changed colour.

"I—I—that is a strange ques-

tion,' he stammered. 'Why do you ask it?'

'Yes or no?' I cried wildly. 'Yes or no?'

He frowned, looked down, hesitated. 'I admit,' he said, after a moment or two,—'I admit that I may have heard something tending that way. It may be that the maiden cherished some secret doubt. Yet she was no professed Christian.'

'*Laid in earth without one Christian prayer; with Hebrew rites; in a Hebrew sanctuary!*' I repeated to myself.

'But I marvel how you come to have heard of this,' continued the rabbi. 'It was known only to her father and myself.'

'Sir,' I said solemnly, 'I know now that Salome da Costa is dead; I have seen her spirit thrice, haunting the spot where—'

My voice broke. I could not utter the words.

'Last evening, at sunset,' I resumed, 'was the third time. Never doubting that—that I indeed beheld her in the flesh, I spoke to her. She answered me. She—she told me this.'

The rabbi covered his face with his hands, and so remained for some time, lost in meditation. 'Young man,' he said at length, 'your story is strange, and you bring strange evidence to bear

upon it. It may be as you say; it may be that you are the dupe of some waking dream—I know not.'

He knew not; but I—ah! I knew, only too well. I knew now why she had appeared to me clothed with such unearthly beauty. I understood now that look of dumb entreaty in her eyes—that tone of strange remoteness in her voice. The sweet soul could not rest amid the dust of its kinsfolk, 'unhousel'd, unanointed, unaneal'd,' lacking even 'one Christian prayer' above its grave. And now—was it all over? Should I never see her more?

Never—ah! never. How I haunted the Lido at sunset for many a month, till spring had blossomed into autumn, and autumn had ripened into summer; how I wandered back to Venice year after year, at the same season, while yet any vestige of that wild hope remained alive; how my heart has never throbb'd, my pulse never leaped, for love of mortal woman since that time—are details into which I need not enter here. Enough that I watched and waited, but that her gracious spirit appeared to me no more. I wait still, but I watch no longer. I know now that our place of meeting will not be here.

### THE STORY OF THE YELLOW BANDANNA.

It may be safely asserted that when any considerable number of strangers are accidentally thrown together, it mostly happens that, though the larger proportion of them are entirely insignificant and likely to be passed over with little or no notice, there are a few who seem to stand out from the rest, sepa-

rated from them by some marked individuality of appearance, or some peculiarity of behaviour. It was so on this occasion. Most of the individuals of whom this weather-bound community was composed were of the commonplace sort. A single glance at them was enough, and more than enough. A small



minority only attracted any general attention.

Among these last must be especially mentioned two persons, the one chiefly remarkable for his personal appearance, and the other by reason of something very singular in his way of conducting himself. The first of these was a middle-aged gentleman, verging perhaps on the elderly, but quite brisk and hearty for all that. He was of short stature, and, owing to some casualty, or perhaps to defective growth, had a certain twist in his figure, one shoulder being in a marked degree higher than the other. He had very white hair, and very dark eyebrows; his short whiskers, shaved off under the cheek-bone, were also quite dark; and as he wore black spectacles, there was a variegated black-and-white look about him which could not fail to draw attention to him, and which was further carried out by the costume which he wore; he being dressed in a complete suit of black, but wearing a white hat, a white neckcloth, and white gaiters. Altogether, he was one of those people whom, having once seen, we do not soon forget.

This little gentleman attracted a certain amount of attention from most of those by whom he was now surrounded; but there was one among the company who seemed to be so entirely taken by storm, and bewildered by something in the short stranger's appearance, as apparently to lose for a time all control over his actions. His conduct, indeed, was most remarkable; and it was that, rather than any personal peculiarity about him, which attracted notice. Indeed, as to his external characteristics, there was little noteworthy about the man, except that he had a somewhat anxious expression of face, and that he clung with great tenacity to a small portmanteau which he carried

about with him. It was his behaviour, not his appearance, which was so strange. He would stare at this gentleman with the white hair and the black spectacles for two or three minutes at a time, and would then withdraw his gaze suddenly, and closing his eyes would seem to be comparing the figure with which those organs had just been busy with some image which dwelt in his own recollection. Then he would open his eyes suddenly again, and again closing them would tax his mental vision once more.

Nor was the man with the portmanteau content with an ordinary face-to-face examination of the owner of the white hat and gaiters. He seemed to entertain a morbid desire to study his back view and his profile, and more than once he actually left his seat and placed himself first behind, and then at the side of, the subject of his scrutiny. At last he came back to his place with the air of one whose mind is finally made up. Yet even then his behaviour was very far from being of a kind calculated to abate the great amount of curiosity which his conduct had awakened among the persons by whom he was surrounded. There was a general feeling in that company—which was none the less powerful because it was unexpressed—that his recent manner of proceeding required explanation. Indeed, the man appeared to know this himself; and it was observed by those who still kept a watchful eye upon all his movements, that he seemed more than once to be on the point of addressing his company, and that more than once he obviously balked himself when just about to speak, and lapsed back into silence awkwardly enough. At last it became evident that he really had made up his mind to say something. He coughed once or twice, moved uneasily in his seat, and finally

broke out in a most abrupt manner:

'I have a—a statement to make which I wish to address to you all here present, but more especially to the gentleman in the—in short, to *you*, sir;' and he indicated with a wave of the hand the very personage whose external appearance he had all this time been so closely scrutinising, and who now seemed for the first time conscious of the other's existence. The little gentleman had, indeed, till now been studying a copy of *Galignani* with much apparent satisfaction.

'To *me*, sir!' he now exclaimed, looking up in great consternation. 'To me? I think, if you'll excuse my saying so, that you must be labouring under some mistake. You must be taking me for somebody else.'

'Nothing of the kind, sir, I assure you,' replied the other; 'there is no mistake possible. At a first glance I thought myself that perhaps I might be deceived; but the back view—or rather the view with three parts back and a glimpse of profile—ah!' (at this point the speaker gave vent to a deep sigh)—'there could be no mistake about that; I knew it too well.'

The gentleman with the black spectacles was evidently becoming something uneasy. The eyes of at least half the company were fixed upon him, the staring being equitably divided between himself and the person who had just done speaking. It was an embarrassing situation. The little man folded up his *Galignani*. He was the very soul of politeness, but he felt that this was a case in which a certain firmness, not to say severity, was due to himself.

'After what has passed,' he said—he had a curious and rather comfortable habit of smacking his lips between every half-dozen words of dialogue—'after what has passed,

I am afraid it becomes incumbent upon me to request—in fact I owe it to myself to beg—that you will lose no time in favouring me with some sort of explanation.'

'O, you needn't be afraid,' interrupted the other; 'I'll explain fast enough. I haven't been waiting all this time, longing, yearning if you like, for this opportunity, to let it go when it comes in my way at last. No, no, you shall have abundant explanation. But, first of all, perhaps I'd better restore—' He interrupted himself here to begin hastily undoing the straps of his portmanteau, but presently seeming to abandon some intention which he had had for the moment in his mind, he as hastily did them up again. 'Time enough for that by and by,' he said, as if speaking to himself.

The gentleman with the black spectacles looked round upon the persons assembled with a slight shake of the head, indicative of an opinion that somebody not far off had a very large bee indeed in his bonnet.

'A year or two ago,' said the subject of these alarming suspicions, looking up from the portmanteau-straps with which he was still busy, 'I was a very poor man indeed.'

The alarm occasioned by this announcement was, as might be expected, very great and very general. Certain members of the company proceeded to scrutinise the garments and get-up of the speaker, as if to ascertain whether he might be still in a state of insolvency; others shook their heads, and assumed a hard and impervious expression of face. A dim apprehension seemed to pervade the society that this speech might, perhaps, only be the prelude to some new development of the begging art. Lacerated by these doubts, society kept silence, and the man with the portmanteau went on.

'I was really, at the time I am speaking of, desperately poor, and had, in fact, fallen into a condition in which a man is not disposed to stick at trifles, when a chance of making even a small sum of money comes in his way. My professional resources—I should mention, by the bye, that I was devoted entirely to literary pursuits—were exceedingly slender, and were becoming, as I found to my cost, less and less to be depended on daily; while as to my private means—these had suddenly been reduced to nothing. I was dependent upon the caprices of a rich and conservative uncle, who lived in the country; and he had suddenly stopped the supplies in consequence of an article, of a highly unconservative nature, which I had lately written, and which had unluckily come in his way. Of course I lost no time in sending a long letter, signed, to the *Whittlebridge Champion* (which I knew he took in), expressing opinions of a widely different nature; but the letter was not published for some weeks, and in the mean time I remained penniless. What was I to do?'

There was something about this preliminary statement so much akin to the sort of harangue with which a weaver out of employment sometimes favours the inhabitants of a quiet street in the suburbs, that the impression mentioned above, that an appeal for alms was coming, decidedly gained strength at this juncture.

'What was I to do?' the speaker went on, unabashed by the cold looks which were bent upon him. 'I turned over in my mind all sorts of schemes for making money, and was obliged to reject them, one after another. I wanted, if I could, to strike out something new in the line in which I was engaged. Unless I could do this, I felt that I was lost. I had worked my ideas and my experiences threadbare;

and as to my opinions, the public did not seem to want them. It was evidently necessary to startle the world with some entirely new thing. The only question was, what was that new thing to be? Was there anything left to do that had not been done already? In whatever direction I looked, had not somebody or other been at work before me? Yes, I was constrained to admit, the adventurous spirits had penetrated everywhere. Men had ascended to the summits of Matterhorns, and descended to the abysses of Wheal Pollicies, or whatever they call those Cornish mines which we read of in the newspapers. They had crossed the Atlantic in pleasure-boats; they had gone up the Danube in canoes. They had visited the great Salt Lake, and partaken of Mormon hospitality. They had penetrated to the Polar Sea in one direction, and to the sources of the Nile in another. All these things had been done, and—what was worse for me—written about; while as to what might be called home-achievements, experiences engaged in on English ground, they had been worked harder yet. Men had been up in balloons, and down in diving-bells. They had travelled on locomotive engines at express speed. They had eaten in cheap dining-halls, and drank at friendly leads. Nay, one courageous gentleman had, on a recent occasion, so completely sacrificed his love of ease to his determination to pass through some new experience, as to assume the character of a pauper, and spend a night in the casual ward of a workhouse.

'Such being the condition of affairs, what remained for me to do? Society was pampered with mental food of the most stimulating kind; what article of diet was I able to supply which would be sufficiently highly seasoned to stir

the jaded intellectual appetite of the public? Should I make a tour round England in a bath-chair? Should I cross the Channel in a cork-jacket? Or should I proceed altogether on a different tack, and abandoning all ideas of adventure and sensation, do something in the *voyage-autour-de-ma-chambre* way? Should I take my table-drawer and give an elaborate history of its contents? Or place myself at my window and write a description of all the people who went into the public-house opposite, with speculations as to their respective biographies?

'No, none of these things would do. To retrieve fortunes so broken as were mine, something more was necessary, and I knew it. Gentlemen,' said the man with the portmanteau solemnly, 'and you, sir' (addressing the traveller with the black spectacles), 'more especially, I am coming to the point. As I sat despondent, and reflected upon all these things, suddenly there was borne in upon my mind, with a crash which I can only compare to the bursting open of a railway-carriage door when the train is going at full speed, a new idea. Yes, there was, after all, something to be done. There was just one way in which a literary character might still achieve fame and distinction. One thing left for me to do which would bring me not only fame and distinction, but that which must ever ultimately accompany them—money! The thing to do was to COMMIT A CRIME—to go through all that followed—committal, trial, punishment, and then—write an account of it.'

It was a curious thing to observe the effect of the portmanteau-man's narrative upon his listeners as it went on. They began, as has been shown, by looking upon the speaker in the light of a beggar who did his business in a roundabout way. Gradually, however, this impres-

sion lost its hold, and was succeeded by a conviction that the man was a harmless eccentric, to be regarded with a sort of amused pity by wiser folks; but from the moment when the last terrible announcement of his felonious intention was made, this unfortunate personage underwent another descent in the scale of general opinion, and at last came to be regarded—now that he had acknowledged himself a criminal—almost with as much horror as when the belief had prevailed that he was profoundly steeped in poverty. As to the gentleman with the black spectacles, he had sat gazing over the tops of those optical preservatives in speechless astonishment from the moment when he had last spoken, with his eyes riveted to the countenance of this strange person who had claimed his attention in so pressing a manner.

'This idea,' the man with the portmanteau went on, 'had no sooner entered my brain than it took root there. I could think of nothing else but my new project for winning fame and fortune. It was the thing—the only thing—that would do. The sole question—and this I found rather a difficult one to deal with—was as to the exact nature of the crime which I was to commit. I went through the whole catalogue of them, and did full justice to the merits and demerits of each. Of course the most satisfactory of all—the crime in which the public might be expected to take the greatest interest—would be murder!' (A shudder ran through the assembled company.) 'There were, however, difficulties of an insuperable nature which made the choice of this particular peccadillo undesirable. I felt, to begin with, a curious sort of repugnance—even with the great and glorious object before me of attaining wealth and fame—to the idea of sacrificing the

life of a fellow-creature, and so 'wading through slaughter to a throne;' and I remembered, besides, that the peculiar nature of the penalty which attaches to this act of felony would render it a matter of extreme difficulty to write an account of it afterwards. One had heard, certainly, of people going through the hanging process with a silver wind-pipe in their throats, and being none the worse for it. It would be a tremendous hit, no doubt, a description of the sensation of being hung, by one who had tried it. The temptation was great—but no, the risk was a little too great also.

'I came to the conclusion, then, that some smaller act of felony must serve my purpose;—something in the way of petty larceny—some robbery without violence. Highway robbery would never do. It was opposed to my principles, and then, supposing one's victim to be armed—only a sensible precaution in these days—one might get a bullet through one's head, and what would become of fame and fortune then? House-breaking, again, was liable to the same objection which applied to highway robbery; and besides I didn't know how to set about it. You require a careful education before you can set up in the house-breaking business. I was obliged to give a whole morning to this embarrassing question of choice; but I came to a conclusion at last, and resolved, finally and irreversibly, that the thing to do would be—to pick a pocket.

'I came to this conclusion,' the narrator of this strange story continued, without noticing the contemptuous expression with which he was now regarded by his audience,—'I came to the conclusion that the picking of a pocket was the smallest crime which would serve my turn. I shall of course do it—I reasoned with myself—as my object is detection, in some

place where I shall be observed; in fact, if possible, I should wish a policeman to be looking on at the moment of my committing the offence. The person operated upon will therefore get his property back again, and no one will be the worse except myself, and that only for a time. As to what I shall have to go through, I must make up my mind to it. I shall be collared, haled through the streets, examined in open court, sent to prison and to hard labour. A *mauvais quart d'heure* no doubt; but think of the reward! Think of the sensation which such a piece of description would make! Think of the sum of money which the proprietor of the *Weekly Eye-opener* would give me for it at once! Think of the subsequent profit and renown!

'You have no idea,' said the man with the portmanteau, turning himself about, and unthinkingly addressing himself to a very guileless-looking clergyman, who was sitting near him, 'what a difficult thing it is to pick a pocket—and more especially when it is your particular object to be caught in the act. Over and over again I went forth determined to do what I had to do—for my intention now had become a fixed idea, and haunted me perpetually; and over and over again I came home without having accomplished my object. Either opportunities were wanting, or else they came and I had not resolution enough to seize them. In short, I hesitated.

'At last, one day, when I had been more particularly pressed for money than usual, and was therefore in a thoroughly desperate mood, a chance came in my way for the carrying out of my project, and I used it.

'It was on a certain day in March, a sunny, windy, dusty March day, that I came to the determination that I would delay the execution

of my scheme no longer. I had had an altercation, originating in a certain pecuniary sterility on my part, with my landlord in the morning, and went forth immediately afterwards primed for action, and with my courage screwed up to the sticking-place. I was dressed in the very shabbiest attire of which I was possessed, which is saying a good deal; and I think that as far as externals went, I was got up for the part which I was going to play quite successfully.

'Somehow or other,—I really hardly know how, for I took little heed of the direction in which I was walking,—I found myself, in the course of half-an-hour or so from the time of my leaving home, in Southampton-row, Bloomsbury. Why I went there, I have not the least idea. My impression is, that I abandoned myself to Destiny, and that Destiny induced me to bend my steps towards that particular thoroughfare for reasons of her own; at all events in Southampton-row I turned up about half-an-hour after leaving my lodgings; and in Southampton-row I found—brought together, so to speak, for my special benefit—all that was necessary for the carrying out of the enterprise on which I was now determined to engage. How well I remember everything connected with the event of the day,—the scene, and all the surrounding circumstances! I remember the different shops, and what was sold in each of them. I remember the broad pavement, the bare strong light, the thin sun-gleam of the shrillest of all the months of the year, the dry wind, the dust garnered up on the footway, where it was sheltered by the houses. I remember that there were plenty of passers by, that there was actually a policeman within sight, that there were carts and cabs and carriages; but most of all I remember that an elderly

gentleman, whose appearance I will not now stop to describe, *but which I shall never forget* as long as I live, was standing reading a handbill or advertisement, which was placed in a window of one of the houses; that he seemed inordinately absorbed in its perusal; and that his handkerchief, a yellow silk of the kind called bandanna, was partly hanging out of his skirt-pocket.'

The narrative was interrupted at this crisis by the little gentleman with the black spectacles. 'You mentioned just now,' he remarked, 'that the—the—occurrences which you are describing took place on a certain day in March. May I ask if you are speaking of the month of March last?'

'I am speaking of March '65,' was the answer.

'Dear me, dear me!' said the little gentleman. 'And did you say a *yellow* bandanna?'

'I said a yellow bandanna.'

'Why, good gracious me!'

'Sir,' interposed the man with the portmanteau, with a gesture that seemed to implore forbearance, 'let me beg that you will not anticipate. A little patience, and you shall know all.—Gentlemen,' continued the speaker, addressing the assembled company once more, 'from the moment of my first catching sight of that protruding bandanna, I had no more doubts and misgivings. I felt that it was destiny, and the conviction nerved me for all that was in store. The moment has come, I said to myself; here is the crisis of my life. Fame or obscurity, wealth or poverty; now or never. My mind was made up. I advanced stealthily towards my victim; feigned, for an instant, to be occupied in reading the handbill which seemed to interest him so much; and then, slightly lifting the tail of his coat with my left hand, I drew with my right the bandanna



handkerchief from his pocket, and became, in one second of time, a thief—a member of the criminal population, a felon who might be sent to gaol at any moment.

‘It may safely be affirmed,’ continued the narrator of this strange story, after a short pause, ‘that into all those critical situations of our lives on which we have dwelt much in anticipation, there enters invariably some element on which we had not counted, and which serves to throw out all our calculations. It was so now. When I had originally made up my mind to commit a felony, I had felt quite sure that I should be caught in the act of stealing—that I should be laid hold of by indignant bystanders, handed over to the civil power, and straightway brought to justice. With a distinct view to such a consummation, I had performed my exploit in a public place, with plenty of people about, and with a policeman actually within a dozen paces of me; and yet, incredible as what I have now to say must seem to everybody, I only narrate the simple truth when I state that, on my turning round, after the completion of that act of felony which I have just described, with my victim’s yellow bandanna still in my hand, I found, to my unbounded astonishment, that the whole of my recent proceedings had been entirely unobserved. The passers-by were busy with their own affairs; the individual whom I had relieved of his property was absorbed in the perusal of the handbill which he was studying; and the policeman was occupied in directing the removal of an orange-barrow, which an Irishman, in flagrant defiance of the laws of our country, had drawn up by the side of the pavement.

‘In one moment an entire change took place in all my sensations. I experienced one emotion, and one only,—a sense of the profoundest

and most intense relief that I was undetected. It was the strangest and most rapid revulsion of feeling which could be conceived. Escape was now my only object. I glanced hastily round, thrust the handkerchief, by a sort of instinct, and not knowing what I did, into the breast of my coat, and bolted round the corner. I had become a thief, and I acted like one.

‘This state of feeling did not, however, last long. I had not walked twice up and down Queens-square before a reaction, of a totally different sort, set in. I was now overwhelmed with shame and disgust. I reproached myself bitterly with the failure of my enterprise. What a failure! What a break-down! A thing begun and not carried through; a theft committed; my honour compromised; the stolen property, which I had calculated would at once find its way back into its owner’s hands, actually in my possession. It was intolerable. I felt that something must at once be done. Reparation must be made—justice satisfied. In a very short space of time I found myself once again in Southampton-row, and posting back to the place where my crime had been perpetrated.’

‘May I ask,’ inquired a certain priggish member of the audience, interrupting the speaker at this point,—‘may I ask what were your intentions in returning to the spot which was the scene of your—your—very discreditable exploit?’

‘It is more than I can tell you,’ replied the story-teller. ‘A vague desire—perhaps, such as they say murderers experience—to hover around the locality where the crime had been committed. I hardly know myself what I meant to do. I believe that I entertained a sort of undeveloped half-intention of giving myself up to justice. I had it in my mind to address my-

self to the man I had injured, to show him his pocket-handkerchief, and request him to give me in charge: or I might have recourse to that policeman who had been the cause of all my perplexity. "Leave that unfortunate orange-girl," I might say to him, "and busy yourself with someone who is worth powder and shot. Here am I, a felon; take me in hand and do your worst." It does not matter much, however, what it may have been my intention to have done or said, had I met with either of these two persons. When I got back to the place where I had bartered away my honour for—I was going to say gain; but what had I gained but this yellow bandanna, of which I already hated the sight?—when I did reach this disastrous spot, I say, I found a new set of *dramatis personæ* entirely occupying the ground, and no signs whatever of either my victim himself, or the policeman who was bound to protect him, and didn't.

'Whether, if I had found him still reading that unlucky advertisement, I should have revealed to the original owner of the yellow bandanna the change of proprietorship which had befallen his pocket-handkerchief, I am not in a condition to say; but it certainly is the case that *not* finding him so engaged, and in fact not finding him at all, I felt that the one desire of my soul was to inform him of the injury which he had sustained at my hands and to make due reparation for it. No such thing, however, was now possible. That ill-used person was gone, and I had no clue to the discovery of his whereabouts. What was I to do? I asked myself that question over and over again, and could find no answer to it. I felt thoroughly wretched and degraded. I had so utterly failed. I had been guilty of a base act, and the object, with

the desire of gaining which I had committed that act, was as far from being attained as ever. I was not even on the way towards its attainment. That was the dreadful part of it. I had simply added one more to the number of my embarrassments, which certainly was not necessary.

'All that day I wandered about in a piteous state of indecision and misery. I hovered around police-stations and police-courts. I went into one of these. A host of small charges were being disposed of; among them a case similar to my own. What disgust I felt! I might be in that miserable wretch's position, I said to myself, as I glanced at the greasy ruffian, who was charged with this *act of felony*. Might be! Ought to be, you mean, retorted that inner self, with whom we are all well acquainted, and who is always ready with cheering and agreeable remarks. The bandanna was all this time in an inside breast-pocket. It was a large bandanna, and I was continually conscious of its presence. It seemed to swell into a huge bundle as it lay over the region of my heart. Perhaps its pressure was typical.

'At last I determined that I would go home—more, I believe, in consequence of my inability to keep any longer upon my legs than because I wanted to be under a roof. Ah, I thought to myself, as I approached the door, what would I give to be possessed of the integrity which was still mine when I left this house a few hours ago! Then I was, at least, an honourable pauper; now I am a dishonourable pauper. There was a letter on my table when I got home. It was a lawyer's letter containing what would once have been very good news. My uncle had directed his solicitors to inform me that my allowance was to be renewed from that day. He had read my con-

servative letter to the *Whittlebridge Champion*, which, it appeared, had only just been published, and was highly gratified by the sentiments which it contained. The renewal of my allowance was an expression of his satisfaction.

'The failure of my scheme now seemed to be complete. Not only had it broken down utterly in the execution, but the very necessity for undertaking it at all had in a great measure ceased to exist. Meanwhile there was that dreadful handkerchief on my hands, destroying all my prospects. Here was I once more in comparatively easy circumstances, with every facility afforded me of being what is called a respectable member of society, but blasted by the consciousness that I had stolen goods, or at least a stolen good in my possession. What should I do? That handkerchief haunted me. It was to me what the "body" is to a murderer.

'As day succeeded day, the consciousness that the bandanna was in my possession still became even more and more insupportable. The very name, which by the common consent of mankind had been bestowed on this article of haberdashery, got to have a hateful sound in my ears. The sight of one of these handkerchiefs in a shop-window or in a friend's hand would knock me over at any time. So would any allusion to the class of offences which are ordinarily called "petty larcenies." I recollect one occasion when a certain member of a society in which I found myself gave an elaborate description of the process of picking a pocket. I made a sickly attempt to smile and appear interested. I even said I wondered how it was done, and how it was possible that a man could have his pocket picked without feeling it. "It depends," said my informant, "en-

tirely upon what you are doing at the time. If your attention is absorbed in any way, you don't notice it; pickpockets, you know (he said, 'you know'), always choose a moment when your attention is engaged." "O, indeed!" I said in a light and easy way, but with a queer gurgle in my voice, which I could hear myself—"O, indeed!"

'It was dreadful to have that bandanna among my possessions, and many were the expedients to which I had recourse in the hope of mitigating its oppressive power. I tried ignoring its existence, locking it up in an old trunk which I never had occasion to open. But this was a total failure. A consciousness of what the trunk contained was in my mind continually, and before my mind's eye that detestable square of silk was continually spread out like a banner. Then I tried familiarising myself with this terrible fabric; actually carrying it in my pocket, and flourishing it about on every occasion. But this did not do either. I had always been in the habit of using white pocket-handkerchiefs; and when I brought out this one—conspicuous, yellow, immense—my friends used to stare at it, or at any rate I thought they did. Then it happened somehow or other that incidents were always occurring which reminded me that this particular handkerchief was not mine. Once, the servant who looked after me at the lodgings brought the odious thing to me with a message from the laundress—was the handkerchief all right? It had come among my things, but the mark was different. "Yes," I replied, "it's all right;" and what a dreadful story that was! On another occasion a policeman spoke to me in the street. "Your handkerchief's hanging out of your pocket," he said. *My* handkerchief, too! What a panic seized me when that constable addressed

me ! I wonder he did not take me up as a safe speculation ; a person obviously guilty of something or other, he might have concluded.

'I used to try to deceive myself, too, sometimes about this business. Was it a joke? Had I done it in fun? I had once seen a facetious gentleman pick the pocket of a friend in fun. Yes ; but then it *was* a friend on whom he had played the trick ; and, moreover, before half an hour had expired, the handkerchief was restored, facetiously as it had been abstracted. My case was different ; I was constrained to admit it—widely different. I was not on familiar terms with the gentleman whom I had robbed, and I had not restored his property to him.

'I think I may safely say that, at this time, no day—hardly any hour—passed which did not find me engaged in some sort of endeavour to discover my victim, to whom I had made up my mind, if once I could get hold of him, to reveal all. I used to try all sorts of experiments with a view to the unearthing of this injured gentleman. No scheme was too unpromising for me. To give some idea of the desperately hopeless enterprises which I used to engage in, I will mention one, among fifty others, of the attempts which I made to effect this discovery on which my mind was set. That handbill which *he* was reading when—when, in short, it happened—might not that advertisement afford me some assistance, some clue? I lost no time in hurrying to Southampton-row, and mastering the contents of the advertisement. It was exhibited in a public-house window, and bore reference, as I found, to a goose-club. A goose-club—perhaps he was a member of it. The mere possibility was enough for me. I determined to inspect the list of members. I knew my victim's initials ; the pocket-

handkerchief was, as I have already mentioned, marked with them, and if I found upon that list any name which agreed with the initials J. M., I should know what to do.'

At this point in the narrative, the little gentleman with the black spectacles, who had been much excited all along, gave a great jump, and seemed once more about to interrupt the story. An imploring gesture, however, on the part of the story-teller restrained him, and the speaker was allowed to proceed.

'Gentlemen,' he said, 'I examined that list. I found a name—John Martin—which corresponded with these initials. I subscribed to the goose-club in order to have the right of attending its meetings. I went, with my heart in my mouth, to the very next of these which took place, and I found that John Martin was a butcher of enormous stature, with a red face, and not my man at all.

'Everything broke down with me in this way ; but I went on. The initials were my only clue, and I stuck to them. I consulted the *Post-Office Directory* with a vague idea of calling upon all the J. M.'s, and asking each one of them if he had lost his pocket-handkerchief. But by the time that I had counted 500 names corresponding with these initials, I began to think that this project must be abandoned like a great many others which I had already entertained.

At last I thought that I would try advertising. It was a final resource, and something might come of it ; at all events, it should be tried. I drew up an advertisement, and caused it to be inserted in various newspapers. "Found" (how devoutly I wished it had been found !) "on the 1st of March ult., in the neighbourhood of Bloomsbury, a POCKET-HANDKERCHIEF. Will be restored to any person fur-

nishing an exact description of the same, including the initials with which it is marked." I gave my address, adding, however, that the advertisement was to be answered by letter only. The answers came thick and fast. It was perfectly astounding to find how many persons had on that eventful 1st of March been deprived of their pocket-handkerchiefs, or who, at any rate, professed to have sustained such loss on that particular day. There were a great many answers,—coming, or professing to come, from ladies,—describing handkerchiefs decorated with all sorts of rich lace and embroidery. It was evidently a prevailing impression that the handkerchief which I had "found" must be one of considerable value to be considered worth advertising at all. My correspondents were, however, not by any means all ladies. The pocket-handkerchiefs, of which descriptions were furnished to me, were of all sorts and kinds. Cambric handkerchiefs, silk handkerchiefs—crimson, white, blue, variegated, snuff-colour. Bandannas too by the dozen were wanted, and even, in more than one case, bandannas of the same colour as the celebrated one which is the subject of this narrative. My correspondents sent me, then, descriptions of every different sort of pocket-handkerchiefs; they wrote in all sorts of different styles, and in all sorts of different handwritings; but in one respect they were all alike. They all fought shy of the question of initials—all, except one.

'Yes, there was one person, and one only, who made reference to those initials in his answer to my advertisement. About three days after the notice had appeared in the papers, I received a letter stating that the writer had, on the day mentioned in my advertisement, lost

his pocket-handkerchief; that the said handkerchief was of yellow silk, of the kind called bandanna, and was marked with the initials J. M. He concluded by requesting that the article in question might be sent to him at the Victoria Railway Station at a certain hour, which he mentioned, next day. He was leaving town by the London, Chatham, and Dover line, and would be in the first-class waiting-room at the hour named, and on the look-out for a messenger carrying a yellow-silk handkerchief in his hand. The messenger, he added, should be properly rewarded.

'Well, it was quite evident that my man was found at last. The "next day" mentioned in his letter was the very day on which it came into my hands; and I found, on referring to my watch, that the hour appointed was so near at hand that it was time for me to proceed at once to the station. I had not the handkerchief about me at the moment; but that did not matter. Having made sure of my man, and got his address, I could easily send it to him afterwards.

'I must acknowledge that I did feel a certain amount of nervous trepidation at the moment of entering that waiting-room at the Victoria Station. What! was I really about to come face to face with the man whom I had so basely injured? Was I actually going to meet my victim? I experienced some very uncomfortable sensations, as I could not help feeling that awkward questions might be asked in the course of the approaching interview. However, it was too late to think of such things now. There was no receding possible; nothing for it but to push open the swinging-door of the waiting-room and go in. I did so, and my first glance round the room told me that my man, the

gentleman whose — well, whose pocket I had picked, was not there!

‘My feelings on making this discovery were decidedly of a mixed nature. There was something of relief in the thought that I should escape what was likely to be an unpleasant scene, and at the same time something of disappointment in the reflection that the hope of a termination to my troubles was still to be a hope deferred. I stood in the door-way of the waiting-room and examined every person in it carefully, to make sure that I was not mistaken. A very tall gentleman in a wideawake hat, who was standing before the fireplace, looked at me earnestly and attentively, I thought; but he was not my man, and I left the room, intending to consume a little time in walking about the station, and then to return once more to the waiting-room, in order to give my victim a second chance. I got through about ten minutes before the station book-stall, and then went back. No new arrival in the waiting-room. The tall man with the wideawake was still standing before the chimney-piece. He stared at me more earnestly than before; and when I left the room with the intention of returning home, and having given up all idea of meeting my correspondent on this occasion, the same gentleman came out after me, and gave such unequivocal indication of a desire to address me, that I pulled up short and waited for him.

‘I beg your pardon,’ he said, slightly touching his wideawake hat, and speaking awkwardly and abruptly enough; ‘but does it happen that you are here in consequence of an answer to an advertisement about—about a lost handkerchief?’

‘I answered in the affirmative, considerably staggered, however, at

being addressed on the subject by this stranger, on whom I felt very sure that I had never set eyes before.

‘Ah, I thought so directly I saw you,’ said the tall man, ‘though you were not carrying the handkerchief in your hand as I had suggested.’ He paused at this point, as if expecting something to be said or done on my part. This new complication, however, paralysed me, and I was silent.

‘I don’t wish to appear abrupt,’ said the gentleman with the wideawake, looking up at the station clock; ‘but my train is just going to start. Have you—may I ask—have you my handkerchief about you?’

‘Before I answer that question,’ I replied, coming a little to myself, ‘you must allow me to ask you one. Are you making this application for yourself? I mean, are you individually the person who lost the handkerchief which—which came into my possession on the 1st of March?’

‘Am I?’ replied the stranger rather impatiently, and again glancing at the clock. ‘Why, of course I am.’

‘Then,’ said I, ‘I must beg leave to inform you that even if I had the handkerchief which was the subject of a recent advertisement about me—which I have not—I should not feel justified in giving it into your possession.’

‘Not!’ repeated the stranger; ‘what do you mean? Was not my description right? Were not the initials correct?’

‘Both right, both correct,’ I replied.

‘Then what do you mean by hesitating?’ The tall man again looked up at the clock, and absolutely began to dance with impatience. ‘I must go,’ he cried; ‘but I will follow this up yet. *Will* you give me my handkerchief?’



'I have already told you,' I answered, now getting hot in turn, 'that I have not got it about me; but if I had, I would not give it you.'

'Not give it to me—and why not?' He was beginning already to move towards the train.

'Because,' I cried, regardless of bystanders and all else,—'because you are not the person who lost it. You are not even like him.'

'Not the person who lost it—not even like him!' he shrieked. 'And pray, sir, if you *found* that pocket-handkerchief'—the bell began to ring—'if you *found* that handkerchief, how the deuce do you know what the person was like who lost it?—answer me that! I must go now,' he went on, retiring up the platform backwards; 'but I'll pursue you. I know where to find you, and I'll pursue you—there's some infernal mystery about this. I'll get to the bottom of it, or know the reason why.' His voice died away in the distance; he was gone, and I was left among the grinning spectators, porters and others, to whom this unusual scene had apparently afforded unmixed delight. Alas, how entirely sound and logical was that man's argument! My theory of the finding of the handkerchief fell through utterly before that dreadful question of his—How did I know, if I had only found the handkerchief, what the man was like who had lost it?

The man with the portmanteau paused as he concluded his account of this stormy interview. When he resumed his narrative, he addressed himself exclusively to the gentleman with the black spectacles.

'I have little more to tell,' he said. 'After the affair at the railway station, I became dispirited and melancholy. The idea of finding the real owner of that unlucky

bandanna seemed to have become hopeless. It occurred to me to try what travelling would do to distract me, and put, for a time at any rate, the whole affair out of my head. It would be one way—perhaps the only way—of getting out of the clutches of that dreadful man at the station, who I felt sure would prove a perpetual source of torment to me if I remained within his reach. I made up my mind, then, to go abroad; and on the very night that succeeded the afternoon on which that unpleasant scene had taken place, I packed up my things—the YELLOW BANDANNA among them—and started for the Continent. I've been travelling about ever since—here, there, and everywhere; and always on the look-out for the one person whom I have felt sure that I should meet, sooner or later. My presentiment has come true at last.'

The story-teller paused again, and then once more stooped down and began to undo the straps of his portmanteau. Presently he looked up, with a queer expression of face, and said, addressing the little man with the black spectacles, who was fidgeting uneasily in his seat,

'Of course, I needn't tell *you* whose pocket I picked on the 1st of March.'

The little gentleman fidgeted more than ever. 'Well, I must own,' he said, 'that about that date—I can't be positive to a day—I certainly *did* lose a pocket-handkerchief such as you have described.'

The man with the portmanteau had got it open by this time, and he now took from its inmost recesses a yellow-silk pocket-handkerchief neatly folded and ironed. 'Is that it?' he asked, handing it to the little man.

The gentleman with the black spectacles took them off, as if the better to estimate the colour of the object which he had just received, and which he now proceeded to

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scrutinise. He also examined the mark.

'Why, yes, I think it is,' he said.

'And I *know* it is,' remarked the other emphatically. He sat a little while silent, and then getting up, crossed over to where J. M. (as we may now call him) was sitting, and held out his hand.

'Will you shake hands,' he

asked, with something of diffidence in his tone, 'with a pickpocket?'

The little man jumped up from his seat and grasped the hand that was extended to him, with many expressions of good-will and friendliness. It was a queer ending to a queer story, and some of those who stood by seemed hardly to know whether to laugh or to cry at it.

The Solicitor, with the experienced chairman's eye, saw this in a moment—saw also that no time was to be lost. The passenger seated next to the bandanna-appropriator was a close-cropped elderly German, who had been in a stertorous sleep from the time he entered the room: it was plain no story was to be had from him. But the man next to him was more promising: a small, slightly-built man, with shaved cheeks and a heavy drooping moustache; a man very well 'got-up' in every way, who had sat with that half-bored air so common among the gilded youth of the period, listening tranquilly to the stories, and occasionally throwing in an interjectional 'Ha!' or 'Jove!' of surprise or approval. To this gentleman the Solicitor addressed his application for a story. It was received with blank amazement. 'Beg pardon—what? *I*—tell story? God bless my soul! my dear sir, point of fact, not in form for that kind of thing, don't you know. Should break down and go tremendous mucker, you know. Never told a story in my life, except about Jack-a-My Nory and those kind of persons—happy childhood, and that kind of thing. Can't imagine how fellows ever—O, by the way—bright idea, by Jove!—I've been staying in Brussels with Clem Penruddock—anybody know him? Was in the Bays; charmin' fellow; come to grief now, poor old boy, and obliged to write things for the what-d'ye-call-'ems—magazines. Got one now in my travelling-bag, taking it over for old Clem to printer-fellow. I'll read you that if you like?' And as we all did like, our friend pulled a manuscript from his bag, and read to us

### *THE DETRIMENTAL'S STORY.*

#### I.

SHE sat leaning forward a little, so that her face—a face for Greuze—was framed by the brougham window, and the light from the great lamp under the Embassy portico fell full upon it. What might have

been dangerous for most women at that hour of the morning Alice, Lady Brankston, probably felt was quite safe for her. So there she sat a moment before she drew her hand away from his unconscionably long pressure.

He, poor fellow, stood bare-headed on the Albert-gate *pavé*, looking at her as if he would have liked to stand there looking at her for an indefinite period; thinking what a darling she was, and wondering more than usual whether he should ever have the pluck to tell her so.

A linkman repeated his raucous yell for Lady Clancrankie's carriage, the nearer approach of which had been barred for the last five minutes by the lingering brougham. The occupant of the latter smiled as she lifted her eyes, and saw over her cousin's broad shoulder the angular, grim-visaged peeress glaring down upon her from the steps. Two A.M. was not exactly the time of a summer's day that the countess showed to the best advantage; and she was shrewd enough to know it. So she stood where she had been entrapped by her inexperienced North-British footman and cursed the Greuze-face more viciously than before. The Greuze-face smiled back sweetly on her. But Lady Brankston was a wise little child; and the most perfect little *patte* of all Boivin's *clientèle* had got, somehow, out of its detainer's close grip the next instant. He was her cousin; of course everyone knew that. But he was *only* her cousin—yet. And so—

And so the violet eyes dropped down again to his; and a voice that a blind man would have loved her for said to him:

'Good-night, Durham. Don't forget, now. To-morrow.'

And then the glass was pulled up, and the brougham drove away.

Quite unconscious of the grinning linkmen, of the half-dozen street Arabs who proffered hansom cabs, requests for *backsheesh*, boxes of cigar-lights, and an impromptu exhibition of 'caten-wheeling,' all in a breath, and under the nose of

a stern but powerless member of the Force; quite unconscious of Lady Clancrankie, who swept past him into her family ark, trumpeting in her wrath like a 'rogue' elephant, Durham Vandeleur remained where Alice Brankston had left him, twisting a great golden moustache that drooped in ambrosial curls below his chin, and staring steadily at the lamp-post at the corner, round which the *fervida rota* of the little lady's chariot had whirled fully a minute ago.

'Regular thingamy, you know?' the Guardsman muttered to himself, but, from long habit, apparently addressing the brandy-faced linkman at his elbow; 'note of what-d'ye-call-it she is to me. Riddle, ain't she? Pretty, but puzzling. Awful, you know. By Jove!'

The expletive came out in a long-drawn sigh, that seemed to rouse the utterer from his trance. He shook himself together and turned up the steps to get his hat and coat. It was about the best ball of the season, that night at the Embassy, and just in full after-supper swing; but what was there for him to stop for now that she was gone, he asked himself.

'I'll walk home,' he determined, dropping his hat on his curly head, and diving into the dust-coat pockets for a cigar-case. 'I'll walk home, and have a pipe, and—and think,' he added desperately, as if he had made up his mind to commit suicide.

'Going, old boy?' a cheery voice asked behind him. 'Same here. We'll go together. Half a jiff, while I loot a tile.' On which errand, his own head-covering having temporarily disappeared, the Honourable Tom Savile strolled off; rejoining his friend, though, in what might be fairly considered an approximation to the infinitesimal modicum of time he had stipulated for, upon the last step, where

in a melancholy manner Vandeleur was kindling a cabana.

'Mind walking?' mumbled Mr. Savile, struggling with a large-sized cheroot on his own account.

'Rather walk,' returned the other.

'Right you are, then. Fact is, Durham,' Mr. Savile went on, hanging on to his taller Damon's arm, as they turned into Knights-

bridge and set their faces towards the east; 'fact is, I've been wanting to talk to you for the last hour, only I saw you were so busy with that flirting little B.'

'Alice ain't a flirt, Tom! At least'—poor Durham felt constrained to qualify the flatness of his denial—'at least I don't *think* she is, you know.'

'O!' Tom returned, looking up



at him rather curiously; 'you don't *think* the little B.'s a flirt, eh? Ah! well, then—'

'Well, what?'

Tom whistled a bar or two of his pet *Soldaten-Lieder*, and looked again up into the other's face, that was calm as ever, but with just a shade of anxiety across it.

'Then,' resumed Mr. Savile slowly—'you don't think she means

anything with that fellow Colocynth?'

The puzzled look on Vandeleur's countenance deepened. He sucked hard at the big cabana till it blazed an angry red; but for a whole minute made no answer.

'Tom, old boy,' he sighed out at length, flinging away, as it were, the Guardsman's mask before his bosom friend, and rather shocking

the latter by the unwonted display of emotion,—‘Tom, I don’t know *what* to think. By Gad! I don’t!’

‘Whe-e-ugh!’ whistled the acute youth, who saw it all now; ‘spoons, eh? Poor old Durham!’

There was a heartfelt, honest pity in the young philosopher’s tone at the notion that his senior had taken the terrible disease he (the young philosopher) had hitherto managed by wise precautions to escape that broke down the guileless Grenadier’s reserve altogether; and out of the fulness of his heart he spake. By the time the two had got as far as Down-street, Tom Savile knew all about the course of his captain’s true love.

‘That’s how it is, you see,’ perorated Durham; ‘I can’t make her out. She’s a regular note of interrogation to me, she is! A co—you know.’

‘Yes,’ prompted Tom—‘nundrum. Go on!’

‘Conundrum. I’ve spooned her all my life, I believe. But of course they’d never have let her have me while I was only a younger son; and so I went away from her with Frank Beaudesert and his brother, after the big game out in Africa, the year she came out. When I heard she’d married old Brankston, I used to wish I might never come back. I did, by Jove!’

‘No good in that, you know,’ observed the practical Tom.

‘However,’ Durham went on, ‘I *did* come back. Old Brankston was dead before they’d been married six months. She was prettier than ever; and I keener on her. She was very jolly to me after a while. At first she seemed savage with me about something. But by and by we got to be just as we always had been. That’s how we are now. She’s heaps of coin; and I’m the head of the house since poor Denis went under. And I might ask her to-morrow.’

‘Why the deuce don’t you, then?’

‘How the deuce can I? I tell you I can’t make her out. Sometimes I think she does really care for me, you know. But then I know I ain’t clever and that, like that fellow Colocynth, and can’t talk pretty to her by the hour as he can. And he seems to be making awful running with her; and she seems to mean him. And sometimes she bullies me and is so hard on a fellow; and sometimes she’s just the other way. And I don’t know what to make of her, or what to do. I’m not exactly afraid of her, Tom, though she is awful sharp and satirical when she likes; but I could no more walk into her drawing-room and tell her right off the reel that I spooned her, and ask her to marry me, than I could ask her to play blind-hookey. I’ve tried it often; and it’s no go. I get stumped directly I open my mouth. If I felt pretty safe, I might do it: but I never can be sure whether she’d take it all right, or whether she thinks I’m a fool, and it don’t matter; or that I’m only Cousin Durham, and she don’t care; and so she’d simply laugh and chaff me. So I’ve gone on keeping it dark from her.’

‘Well, but,’ put in the acute Savile, ‘if you keep it dark from her, how’s she to know?’

Vandeleur wagged his head, and looked down pityingly on his interlocutor.

‘Women know everything, Tom,’ he replied solemnly. ‘There’s nothing they ain’t fly to, in these times. *She’d* know fast enough—if she cared, that is.’

‘Perhaps she *does* know?’ suggested Tom, adroitly adopting his senior’s reasoning. ‘And care, too. But, hang it, you can’t expect her to tell you till you ask her, old boy! Women do cool things enough nowadays, every-

body's aware; but the little B. wouldn't do such a thing as that, by George! You go to Curzon-street, and ask her properly, to-morrow. Perhaps she's only working Colocynth to bring you on, after all!

'Think so?' Durham asked, with temporary animation. 'But no,' he added, moodily; 'Alice ain't a flirt, you know.'

'Ain't she?' observed the Honourable Thomas *sotto voce*; 'deuced good imitation of one, anyhow. Never mind,' he continued aloud; 'you go and ask her like a man, and get it settled one way or the other before dinner to-morrow. Look here,' as a brilliant idea struck him, 'I'll tell you how to do it. *Write to her!*'

Vandeleur pulled up short, and laid his hand on his sub's shoulder. A stray policeman under the Green Park trees on the other side of Piccadilly stopped to wonder what the two swells were up to.

'By Jove!' Durham said feelingly, 'what a clever beggar you are, Tom! I never thought of that.'

Pythias smiled modestly, but immensely flattered by Damon's praise.

'That's what I'd do,' he said; 'and do it to-night too. Then she'll be able to give you your answer when you call to-morrow. She told you to call, you know; so you're sure to find her at home.'

'I'll go and do it now,' the other replied resolutely, flattering himself for a moment that it was as easy for him to do as it looked.

'All right,' Tom nodded. 'Make it pretty strong, I would; and quite plain. A note of interrogation, you know. And now here we are at my corner. Good-night, old boy. Stop, though! I've forgotten what I wanted to tell you. I heard just now there's a screw loose with Bayadère. So I'd recommend you to hedge all you can. Ta-ta!'

'See about that in the morning,' answered Durham, his mind too full of another matter to care much about that promising outsider he had invested so largely upon. 'Good-night.'

And there at the Clarges-street corner the two men separated; Tom Savile to sleep the sleep of the just, and Vandeleur to indite his note of interrogation in the quiet of his chambers in Dover-street.

He put on a smoking-coat, mixed a glass bucket of b.-and-s., lit a black *brûle-gueule* of cavendish, and a lamp on his side-table, and set to work.

Just as he dipped his pen slowly into the ink, a letter lying on the table, which he had failed to notice before, happened to catch his eye.

He took it up and looked at it, not sorry, after all, for the moment's respite it gave him.

'Spavin's fist,' he muttered aloud. 'Something about the filly, I suppose.'

The scroll was from Mr. Spavin, and did concern the Bayadère. It was also much more satisfactory than the intelligence Tom Savile had imparted to her backer half an hour previously.

'I'll send Tom a line,' Vandeleur thought, 'and catch him before he goes down to the Corner. I fancy there's nothing to hedge about. Other way on!'

The sun had risen over the London chimney-pots two full hours when the note of interrogation for Lady Alice in Curzon-street, and the line for Tom Savile about Bayadère, were both written and lying before their greatly-tried author on the blotting-pad.

'Jove! it *was* a pull,' sighed Durham, as he picked out a couple of envelopes and directed them; 'but it's over at last, all right. Wonder what she'll say to it?'

He put the missives in the enclosures; left them where Potts

couldn't fail to see them when he should enter the room by and by ; and betook himself thoughtfully to bed, where Durham Vandeleur dreamed that Lady Alice said 'Yes.'

## II.

Noon in Curzon-street. The little lady was dawdling over her coffee-cup and her rusk upstairs, invisible as yet to other mortal eyes than those of Pauline the privileged. That demoiselle was gliding down on some errand when scarlet on the hall door-mat met her glance. Barker, butler, was in colloquy with a *militaire*. Mademoiselle at once recognised the martial Potts. Potts came to Curzon-street pretty often in these days, and the susceptible Parisienne was conscious of feeling rather a *tendresse* for the stalwart but stolid grenadier, who irritated Barker every time he came by persistently ignoring the area, and effecting an improper entrance in the front of the fortress.

However, Barker was no fool, and had never yet indulged in the luxury of a row with the captain's man, contenting himself for the present by administering a *haut-en-bas* style of treatment, which would have been intensely amusing to a bystander, but which was productive of no perceptible effect whatever on the recipient.

'Ha !' Mr. Barker was observing, when Mademoiselle Pauline came gliding noiselessly down the staircase behind him ; 'ha ! and that's hall, eh, Potts ? Only a billy this mornin' ? No message, no booky ?'

'That's all,' Potts returned ; 'that and the note for Mr. Savile was all the captain gave me this morning.' And Potts opened the door.

'Very good, my man—ve-ry good. You can re-tire.'

The dismissal was pronounced simply *pro formâ*, for the other had already swung-to the door from the

outside, and left nothing for Mr. Barker to address himself to but the letter-box. Potts had gone, and hadn't even seen the disappointed Pauline.

She was close upon Barker now. The latter had just fixed a double eye-glass majestically upon his nose, and was scrutinising the superscription of Durham Vandeleur's note of interrogation, when the French-woman sprang upon him, like a cat, from his unguarded rear, and snatched the letter lightly out of his podgy fingers.

'Aha !' she cried, holding it behind her with one hand, and shaking the forefinger of the other at the speechless majordomo. 'Aha ! qu'est-ce que tu fais là, vieux polisson, hein ? Les lettres de madame—ça me regarde, à moi. Ose encore les visiter—voyons !'

Mr. Barker cleared his throat as though about to give utterance to a severe rebuke ; but the unknown tongue and the truculent air of the soubrette were too much for him, and he was fain to execute a strategic movement with silent, and by no means dignified, expedition, and leave 'that sassy Frenchy,' as he called her in his heart, in possession of the field.

Mademoiselle watched his retreat with a satisfied smile, and then leisurely betook herself back to my lady's chamber, carrying Durham's letter with her.

'De la part de Monsieur le Capitaine, miladi,' she said demurely, as she placed it on the little 'sulky' drawn up close to the sofa, and glanced as she turned away at a mirror opposite, just in time to see the prettiest little flush possible cross miladi's cheek.

Lady Alice took up the scarlet-monogrammed missive that she had recognised the moment she saw it in Pauline's hand, and twisted it about meditatively in her own.

'What can the goose want to



write for,' she thought, 'when he is to come here about the box this afternoon? To tell me he can't come, perhaps. And yet he seemed delighted enough in his way when I told him he was to, last night. But then I don't think I understand Durham. I fancied once he cared for me. And now I fancy—No, I can't make him out. Durham's a puzzle. He follows me about everywhere; but he's so provokingly imperturbable I don't know what he means by it. He never *says* anything. Then he'll sit here by the hour; but I've never quite decided whether it's in silent adoration of me or intricate calculation of the odds on the next race he's an entry for. Provoking! He won't get jealous of that donkey Colocynth. When I bully him, he pulls that great stupid moustache of his, and looks at his boots; and when I talk prettily to him, he goes on pulling his moustache and looks at me—and that's all. What am I to do with him? I care about him, don't I? I'm afraid so. More about him than anyone? I'm afraid so, again. Because, if he don't happen to care about *me* more than anyone else, why—it will be awkward, won't it? Now, *does* he? I don't know. But I will though! I'll put an end to this this afternoon. It's too much to be perpetually confronted with an eternal note of interrogation! *A nous deux, monsieur!* But perhaps he isn't coming?'

And thus brought back to Durham's unopened letter, the little lady pulled it out of its envelope.

She glanced at the first line, and then looked back at the address. The address was her own—perfectly correct.

'Then what,' she asked herself aloud,—'what does he mean by calling me "Dear Tom?"'

Then she read what follows, and what we will read over her shoulder.

'Dear Tom,' Durham had scrawled, 'don't hedge a half-penny. Bayadère's all serene. I shall stand the lot on her; and if you can get the long odds you may put on an extra pot for me in the shape of an additional monkey or so. I'm bound to be in Curzon-street this afternoon, or I'd be down at the Corner myself.—Ever yours, D. V.'

The little lady looked rather bewildered when she'd finished.

'What ever does it all mean?' she wondered. You see, mesdames, her education was hardly up to your mark; she honestly didn't understand 'stable.'

She laid the letter down and laughed.

'I see!' she told herself at length, 'the goose must have been writing to "Dear Tom" and me at the same time, and made some stupid mistake in the envelopes. And "Dear Tom" must have got *my* letter! Pleasant! I wonder what he wrote to me about?'

She rose rather impatiently, and crushed poor Durham's unlucky scrawl close in her little clenched hand.

'Care for me! He cares twice as much about his Bayadère! I've no patience with him! But what could that letter I ought to have got have been about?'

### III.

Two o'clock. My lady had got into armour and her drawing-room, and was waiting in a coign of vantage there, under arms, for the enemy's appearance. The note about Bayadère, carefully torn in two, had been tossed on to the top of a basket of feminine *chiffons*, where it was well within range of its author's eyeglass when he should have taken up his usual position in his peculiar chair.

Five minutes past two by the Louis-Quinze clock. The little





lady looked up from the thoughtful cutting of the *Modes de Paris* portion of a new magazine she was engaged in, and began tapping the cover impatiently with the bright blade of a big Algerian poniard she had taken a fancy to, one day when she and Blanche Vandeleur had amused themselves by pulling to pieces a little stand of arms Durham had got fixed up in his smoking-recess, under the delighted eyes of the proprietor. Lady Alice had carried off the dagger in its workmanlike plain shagreen sheath, and was wont to use it, somewhat to the danger of her pretty fingers, as a peaceful paper-knife. She had rather a vicious grip on the heavy silver handle just now, though, and the violet eyes were darkening with anger against someone.

'He's nearly ten minutes late,' she murmured. 'After last night, and that letter I ought to have had this morning, if he don't come in five minutes I'll order the carriage. The great goose! What can he be about? Calmly lunching at the club, I suppose, while I'm—Ah! take care, *monsieur mon cousin*—take care!'

She looked delicious in her wrath, that was about half real. Perhaps, meeting her own reflection in the glass of a convenient *console* at the moment, she thought she did. For the little cloud vanished; the sunshine of a smile shone out again; there was plenary absolution for all the sins he had *not* committed in the tone of the—

'Poor Durham!'

The 'great goose' was not calmly lunching at the club; on the contrary, the 'great goose,' having spent the greater portion of the morning in the service of an ungrateful country, had driven back from Barracks in a swift hansom, had changed the habiliment of its exterior, and, with no better prepara-

tion for its ordeal than a glass of sherry swallowed in haste, was at that very moment turning, with mien impassible as ever, but more nervous really than it ever had been in all its life, round the corner into Curzon-street.

A clatter of hoofs outside; Durham's voice distinctly audible through the open windows of the drawing-room; then a knock at the street-door.

'At last,' the little lady thought, giving a final glance at her preparations, and taking up her magazine ready to be absorbed therein when Barker should 'discover' her.

But it was not the respectable Barker who burst open the drawing-room door so unceremoniously, and charged into that dainty apartment crying out:

'O, Auntie! Auntie!'

That was Lord Edric Brankston, a nephew of my lady's; a young swell of the tender age of ten, in an elaborate riding-costume, and with a decided black eye. This youth had just returned from his morning ride; and it was his pony and his attendant's horse who had made all that clatter below.

'Good gracious, Edric! What *have* you been doing, you dreadful child?' his horrified relative inquired, when she became aware of his condition.

'*He* did it!' his lordship explained, unearthing a *bonbonnière* from the basket on the table, and turning over its contents to get at a particular 'goody' he much affected.

'I say!' he went on reproachfully; 'how jolly greedy you are, Auntie! You've eaten all the chocolate creams! I left four of 'em on purpose for myself, you know; and now there ain't one. And I hate these beastly burnt almonds.'

'Put that down, sir, and attend to me directly!' Lady Alice said,

with great severity. 'Now, *who* did it, if you please?'

'Young cad outside,' mumbled my lord, with his mouth full of the despised burnt almonds. 'He cheeked me, and I hit him with my whip. And then he called me a coward; and then I got down and pitched into him; and I licked him too, though he was twice my weight, uncle Durham said. And then uncle Durham gave me a sovereign.'

'*Did* he! Uncle Durham ought to be ashamed of himself, then. But you are a brave boy, dear. Only it's very wrong to fight, Edric. I won't have you do such things; and if uncle Durham chooses to encourage you—Where is he all this time, darling?'

'Downstairs talking to the Peeler about the row; he'll be up directly,' my lord returned.

'Ah! Then you come with me to Pauline, and have your face washed, sir! I'm going to give uncle Durham a good scolding,' the little lady said, rising as she spoke, and marching off her prisoner.

'What are you going to scold *him* for?' inquired, aptly enough, the captive, as the two passed through the *portières*. 'Because he's afraid of you, you think? Awful bullies you women are!'

When, after arranging matters with an intelligent guardian of the peace, who had witnessed the duel with great interest, and who only interfered at the last moment, to recommend the vanquished street Arab to take himself off with all convenient speed, lest he should find himself in trouble; and having applied a golden salve to the vanquished one's wounds, thereby causing that bleeding hero to affirm energetically his willingness to be 'wopped worse twice a day' for an indefinite period on similar terms; when, by and by, Durham got into the drawing-room, my Lord Edric

was in Mademoiselle Pauline's safe keeping, and Lady Alice entrenched securely once more.

'Afraid of me?' she thought, when the door opened, as the boy's words recurred to her; 'is that it, I wonder? Fancy a London man in this year of grace being afraid, though! Well; he sha'n't go till I know!—O! there you are, Durham!' she said aloud, as he came towards her; 'good-morning!'

'Good-morning, Alice!' the victim responded, getting the little *patte* close within his, and depositing his hat on the table. He was more at a loss than ever what to make of her. She must have got his note of interrogation. Potts had delivered it all right, he knew. And yet, here she was, looking as unconscious as possible; as if she hadn't an idea what he had come for.

'Looks bad, her being so confounded cool. She don't mean to know anything about it. And then, how the deuce am I to tell her?' he thought, struck speechless at this last notion.

'Well, what's the matter, Durham?' she inquired, finding he stood there silently stroking his moustache, and staring at her rather helplessly. 'You got the box, I suppose?'

'Yes,' he returned, calling her heartless in his heart. 'Yes, I got the box you wanted, Alice.'

'Very well. Then sit down, Durham. I've got to scold you.'

He sat down in his usual chair—for him, quite nervous.

'She's savage about the letter!' he said to himself. 'Knew she would be. Wish I'd let it alone!'

'How can you be so absurd—such an utter goose?'

'Knew she'd call me a goose,' he thought, staring moodily at his boots. 'It's all up with me, of course.'

'Giving that child sovereigns for fighting street-boys! You know

how anxious I am about him while I've charge of him; and you go and—'

'O,' he said, brightening up again; 'is that all? Jove! I thought you were angry with me about—about the other thing, you know.'

'But I *don't* know. What other thing, pray?'

'Awful unkind her pretending not to twig!' he muttered. 'How ever am I to bring it out now? Gad! it's worse than if I hadn't written at all, you know.'

'Well, Durham, I'm all attention. What is it?'

He got up and walked across the room and back before he spoke again. She looked at him wonderingly. The man was actually excited about something or other. About what?

'Look here, Alice,' he said, stopping in front of her; 'didn't you get a—a note this morning?'

'A note!' she laughed; 'dozens, of course.'

'But one from me, I mean?'

'O, that!' And she laughed again. 'Yes, you silly Durham, I had that, too.'

'Knew she'd think I was a fool,' the 'silly Durham' told himself, cut to the heart, and showing his pain by never the quiver of a muscle. Not a Red Indian at the stake ever had to take punishment more stoically than the Sybarites of our day must learn to do.

'How could you make such a ridiculous mistake?' she went on.

'Mistake, indeed,' he returned, just a little bitterness apparent in his tone; 'I see it *was* a jolly mistake, Alice.'

'Of course. Fancy sending that unintelligible jargon to *me*, sir?'

'Jargon?' This was rather more than the author could stand quietly. 'Jargon? Why, there wasn't a word in it that ain't in the dictionary.'

'*Your* dictionary, then—the

*Slang Dictionary*. Just look at it now. 'There it is, in that basket. There's enough of it left for you to read, I daresay.'

He picked the pieces mournfully out of the tumbled *chiffons*, and crushed them in his hand without looking at them.

'Well?' she asked, her eyes upon some woman's work she had taken up; 'can you decipher your own hieroglyphics? It was a long while before *I* could.'

He was behind her now, looking for a light of some sort on the davenport.

'Was it?' he answered. 'Ah! and when you had de-what's-his-named-'em—'

'No. Deciphered, please.'

'Well, deciphered my hiero—'

'—glyphics,' she prompted. 'Don't go to sleep, Durham!'

'—glyphics,' he repeated, getting hold at last of a box of vestas; 'you tore 'em up, eh, and left 'em for any other fellow to read?'

'No; for *you* to read. To show you how absurd you'd been.'

'Me to read! Just as if I didn't know 'em by heart. You might have burnt 'em, Alice.'

'Dear me! What did it matter, pray? Besides, there's no fire, you goose.'

'Might have had one lit, you know,' he responded, completing his preparations for an *auto-da-fé* on the broad end of a letter-balance.

She was so used to him that she barely noticed that last remark of his. Besides, she was wondering what could have made him so eloquent about his absurd letter. Couldn't he see he had made a mistake? Or was he thinking still about the one she *ought* to have had? It suddenly flashed across her that the goose might be meaning one thing, and she another; in which case—

Here Durham scraped a vesta,

and set the scraps of the unlucky note alight on the paper-weight. He had got his answer—that cruel laugh just now. She cared nothing for a duffer like him, he saw; nor for his love either, though no one in all the world loved his darling as he did. It was all up with him. There was no use in saying anything more.

She couldn't see what he was about from where she sat; but she heard the crack of the vesta.

'Light that cigar in the hall, Durham,' she said, 'or go into the conservatory, if you want to smoke, please.'

'I ain't going to smoke, Alice,' poor Durham answered, crushing out the embers of the *auto-da-fe*, and taking up his hat by its deep-curved brim; 'I'm going away now.'

She looked up at him, and read something she had never seen on that mask of a face before—it is true, without quite understanding what she read. But in that moment he wasn't quite master of those quivering muscles. The great golden moustache couldn't hide altogether a certain spasmodic twitching about the mouth. And his voice wasn't quite his voice either, she thought. What was the matter with him?

'Going?' she asked; 'what are you going for?'

'I can't stay any longer,' he said; 'and it's better I should go. I sha'n't trouble you about this again, Alice. I quite understand. Shake hands, won't you? It'll be the last time, perhaps.'

And he held out his honest hand to her.

She was mystified still; yet little by little she began to see plainly into her puzzle, to read her riddle aright.

She got up; she took the curly-brimmed hat out of his hand, and put it back on the table again. Then she took both his hands in

hers, and turned him round to the light. He was quite helpless while she held him so. She looked at him curiously.

'Durham,' she said emphatically, 'you're excited! Don't deny it now!'—as he moved uneasily—'you are! Now be good enough to tell me what is the meaning of this phenomenon?'

Chaffing him still, he thought she was, and tried to free himself. She twisted him about as if he had been a fractious child, this strong, stalwart grenadier.

'Answer me, sir!' she said imperiously, thinking she must make him speak now, or never. And she did make him speak.

'You know what I mean fast enough!' he said, rather huskily; 'and—and I'd rather not be chaffed any more. Let me go.'

'Who *is* chaffing you, you great goose?'

'You are!' he broke out rather desperately; 'you have been all along. I was a fool ever to think you'd care for me. But you needn't laugh at a fellow, and call him names.'

'Laugh at you?' she repeated.

'It's—it's heartless of you, Alice! By George it is!'

'Durham!'

'I beg your pardon,' he said humbly, utterly ashamed of himself; 'I told you I'd better go. I'm not fit to stop here. Good-bye, Alice. We've been friends ever since we were little beggars at the Grange together. We mustn't quarrel now, you know.'

He had got her hand again, and was bending over it; so that he never saw how pale her face was grown, nor the tears that had leaped into her eyes.

'Jolly little paw!' he muttered; 'Colocynth or some other lucky devil will get this, I suppose. And I love her better than any of 'em. It *is* lines for a fellow, you know!'



'He *does* care for me, after all!' she was thinking. 'What does he want to go for, then? He *sha'n't* go!'

And, as she felt her hand being released, the little lady slid gracefully into her chair, and murmured behind her handkerchief the never-failing feminine *ducadme*:

'O, Durham! how can you be so unkind!'

He had got half-way to the door; but he was beside her, bending over her, calling himself a brute, before the words were fairly out of her mouth.

Should he ring for Pauline? No? Should he go away? No? Should he stay? A hand was put back into his once more. He was to stay, when she knew how he—how he—

'How you what, Durham?' my lady murmured, still behind the handkerchief.

'How I love you, Alice!'

'At last!' she said triumphantly to herself. 'Do you?' she answered aloud. 'Say it again, then. No!' she whispered with a sudden sharpness that frightened him awfully; 'hold your tongue, and get away directly!'

She had seen the door-handle turn, this clever little woman, even then, and knew Barker was coming in.

As he did, before Durham had recovered from this last shock. He stuck his glass in his eye, and stared at the correct butler, who bore straight down upon him.

'Letter for you, sir,' Barker said, exhibiting one on his salver.

'For me, Barker?' Durham asked, taking the document.

'How stupid of Barker!' thought his mistress.

'Wonder whether the beggar saw me!' thought her lover, as he tore open the envelope.

'Mr. Savile's man inquired if you was here, sir,' the unconscious

creature explained; 'and said it were immediate, if you was.'

And then the intruder majestically took himself off.

'From Tom?' the lover muttered.

'That must be "Dear Tom,"' my lady said, guessing what had come in that envelope at last; 'you wrote to "Dear Tom" about Bayadère, this morning, I know.'

'How do you know?' he questioned, astounded.

'Because the letter to "Dear Tom" came to *me*! I was not to hedge a halfpenny; but to put an extra monkey in a pot; and the rest of it. Don't you remember?'

'Gad!' he exclaimed, enlightened all at once; 'I must have mistaken the envelopes! You got Tom's note; and he—'

'Got mine, I suppose, you great—I beg your pardon, Durham! I mustn't dare call you names any more. Well; he's sent it back—my note?'

'Yes. Says it don't tell him exactly what he's to do about Bayadère. Jove! I should think it didn't!'

'And what does it tell *me*, sir?' she asked, reading it over his arm, on which her hands were crossed. 'O, a note of interrogation! Why couldn't you ask yourself?'

'Afraid to,' he replied; 'I never could understand you, Alice.'

'And you were a puzzle to me,' she returned.

'Jove! Fancy that!' he ejaculated wonderingly.

'And you were afraid to ask me,' she went on, with her eyes still on the note of interrogation she had got into her own hands, at last; 'and so you wrote this: and will I read it, and tell you if you've a chance when you call this afternoon? O, my poor Durham, what did you think of me just now?'

Barker, entering again just then,

might have been an even more unwelcome intruder than on the first occasion.

'And the answer, darling?' Durham whispered, presently. And

then—Well, then Captain Vande-  
leur's dream came true; for Lady  
Alice said 'Yes.'

And there was an end of the  
puzzle.

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'That's rather a good story of old Clem's, eh?' said the reader, when he had finished. 'Can't think how he pumps up all that kind of thing. Suppose it gives me a call, eh? My neighbour here—you don't seem much put out at all this confounded waiting and that, eh? Noticed you've taken it 'markably smoothly; if you take life generally on that principle—stave-off wrinkles, and that kind of thing—could you favour us with a story?'

It was from the calm middle-aged woman whom he addressed, so respectable, so trim, so thoroughly self-possessed without being in the least officious, so clear-voiced, and with the pleasantest Irish accent, that we heard

### THE STEWARDESS'S STORY.

THE young gentleman is quite right in supposing that I don't think much of the storm, and shouldn't have minded crossing in the least if the captain had thought proper to take us. I have seen many a worse night than this, and angrier seas, though how the young gentleman guessed it, if he did guess it, I can't think. Perhaps it was because I took it so quietly when the word was passed that we could not cross to-night, and he was so impatient about it, and tried so hard to induce the captain to change his mind, until he looked at me, in a sudden sort of way, and then he left off; perhaps he saw in my face that I was used to captains, and knew that captains say what they mean, and it's no use either coaxing or bullying *them*. And that is just what I do know, and what I should never think of going against; and so the first word was enough for me, and I knew quite well here we should have to stay, and make ourselves as comfortable or as uncomforta-

ble as we chose. For my part I am very comfortable; and as the young gentleman seems to think it would make the time pass more quickly, I am ready to tell him and you all, gentlemen and ladies, why I was not at all put out by the news of the dirty weather, the sight of the stormy sea, and the captain's refusal to take us across. The fact is, I am a stewardess—not of one of these Calais boats—they carry only a steward, and a hard time he has of it, I can tell you, no matter how fine the weather may be (I must say that of the ladies, they do put upon a man awfully—they're afraid of a cross stewardess, but they never consider a *man's* temper)—but of one of the Holyhead-and-Kingstown boats.

Some of you, perhaps all, know them. They are splendid boats, I will say, though I am not going to ask you to believe that nobody can possibly be sea-sick aboard them, and that they never rock, or pitch, or do any of the things

which it is the nature of steamers to do, and human nature to object to. People can be very ill and very miserable aboard them, I assure you, and all I mean to say is that they are the best things going, in their own way—which is a bad one, I don't deny it; for though I am a stewardess, I am not a humbug, any farther than telling nervous ladies they are sure to have a splendid passage, when the chances are against it, and not being particular to half an hour or so, when people who are weary of their lives ask me, in gasps, how soon we shall be 'in.'

None of you gentlemen and ladies know the Holyhead-and-Kingstown boats? none of you have ever seen my country? Well, that's odd. I can only tell you again, they are very good in their way; and I thought myself very lucky when, through the kind recommendation of a captain, with whom my poor husband sailed for many a day, and more than once round the world—a captain who always meant what he said, *he* was—I was taken on as stewardess to the finest of the four. I won't mention the name, because some day some of you may be crossing over to have a look at Ireland, when there's nothing new left to see on the Continent, and all the exhibitions are done with; and then you will find out for yourselves if you see me trying to look pleasant at the door of the ladies' saloon.

I have seen plenty of bad weather, and of good too. I have seen days and nights so still and beautiful that I have looked at the sea, and thought—particularly when the moon was shining on it, and the monotonous noise the steamer made sounded grand in the quiet—if there is to be no sea in the world which this is to be changed into, it will be some-

thing to miss and long for, only we know that then such feelings cannot be. Many a dark night too, with roaring waves, and thick-wrapping fog, and every sound muffled, and the constant warning of the gun; and then all the ladies who are not too ill are dreadfully frightened, and persist in asking me questions which are hard to answer, though I do know something about a ship. Years ago, I made some long voyages with my husband—years before he went away on that longest one from which he never returned—and sometimes, when we have not been crowded, I have found it a good plan with my ladies to let them talk to me, and to try and interest them in the wonderful structure which contains them for a little. But, bless you, ladies and gentlemen, they hate it; 'a beast' is the mildest name they will give it; even brides, I do assure you, starting on their wedding-tour, detest the steamer, and many a one has said to me, 'It spoils all one's pleasure in thinking of one's wedding-day.' It is very natural, and I daresay we shall not care particularly about this waiting-room, or remember it very gratefully; though I must say I have enjoyed myself here, and have heard some stories which I do believe would have kept the most unmanageable of my ladies from being sea-sick.

What sort of life is it? Do I like it? The first question I cannot answer off-hand; the second I can. I do not like it particularly, but I am content with it; and I am so much better off in it than numbers of other women, left as destitute as I was left, and with the very, very little power of helping themselves which any women have, so far as I know, that I do not forget to be thankful for it. And I daresay, on the whole, I

like it as well as most people who have found the world out like their lives. One strange thing about it is its homelessness. It is not easy to feel settled in a state of things which is like the perpetual crossing and recrossing of a bridge. I am always with people whom I do not know, who are coming I know not from whence, and going I know not whither—with them just long enough to find out what sort of tempers they have, and sometimes to discover that they are particularly joyful or especially sorrowful—either great joys or great sorrows almost always imply locomotion—and then I lose sight of them, without time for speculation about them. Some faces I come to know, but the greater number I see once and never again. I have no settled feeling on board the ship, because I am expecting to have my turn ashore; I have no settled feeling ashore, because I am measuring the time until I go aboard again. The people I know on both sides seem to come and go like people in a dream, because I am always coming and going; and I often think Holyhead on the one side and Dublin on the other have much the same effect to me which I have read that Venice has to the people who live there, with the churches and the bridges rising up suddenly out of the sea, and the steamer for a giant gondola.

Painful scenes? Yes, I see them very often, no one more frequently perhaps, except attendants in the hospitals, or the servants of famous physicians, or undertakers' men—all officials of the kingdom of pain and grief. Of course I see many pleasant sights as well—the pretty and happy young brides, for instance, with their new dresses and new dressing-cases, their new boots, new wraps, and new husbands; the hopeful young things who, in inter-

vals of very unbecoming illness, stealthily examine the new wedding-ring, and rub up the clasp of the travelling-bag, inscribed with the initials not a day old. They are very pleasant to see, especially as I lose sight of them, like the old-fashioned romance, on the wedding-day, and need not follow them, like the new-fashioned novel, to the leisurely repentance which, I suppose, comes to most of them. The boys and girls who come home for the holidays, mostly in garments much too small for them, but in extravagantly high spirits; the tourists, the prosperous business men, the newly-fledged M.P.'s, the benignant members of a privileged aristocracy who occasionally pay a flying visit to their Irish estates;—these are all pleasant sights, and I see and appreciate them. Aristocracy, however, is not privileged in the matter of seasickness, except to be additionally cross, and to resist the malady as an impertinence for which Ireland is in some inexplicable way held accountable; and though I am patriotic enough to hail as a pleasant sight an autumnal cargo or two of lords and ladies, the pleasure and the privilege are not exactly personal.

Parting scenes? Yes, indeed, many a bitter parting I have seen, and many an utterance of sorrow, of despair, quite past all care for reticence, I have heard. Young men going abroad, and bidding their mothers good-bye: that is the saddest and the most frequent sight of all. They may be very brave and hopeful, and the change and novelty may have many charms for them, but they are not thinking of that part of it when they come aboard at Kingstown; and their mothers stand on the pier and look after them, when the hurried parting is over, with such grief-stricken faces. In all the haste

and confusion, and when every one is asking me which is the best sofa, and wanting to secure it for herself, I have noticed these mothers, and wondered, of all the number whom I have seen, how many have welcomed their sons home again from the distant countries; how many have seen the fulfilment of any of the hopes which have struggled with the misery of those partings. The young gentleman is right. I do think more about these things than other people in my circumstances; but there's a reason for that: I had seen a great deal of the world before I became a stewardess, and after I left my quiet home in the south of Ireland; and my own troubles and those of other people have taught me how to think, and given me the habit of wondering and cogitating about my fellow-creatures.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, if it will help to make the time pass, I will tell you a little incident which brought me, not very long ago, in contact with some old associations which I had lost sight of for many a year, and which I thought were past and gone for ever.

When I was a girl, my father was steward to Mr. O'Driscoll of Kilmorey. The O'Driscolls had been great people in their day, but that was over when I first went up to the big house to play with Miss Bride and Miss Honor, and take tea with them when the master and mistress were dining out. I never rightly understood how the trouble had come into the family, but it was easy enough even for me to see that it was there, and in more shapes than one. A handsomer man than Mr. O'Driscoll never stepped, nor a kinder-hearted, but he never could say 'No' to himself or to any other person; and he said 'Yes' in the wrong direction, until there was a poor account of all the property that had been

tacked to the old name. I never saw him without a smile on his face; and the longest day I live I will never forget his parting with my father, when all the property was gone but a wee little bit of a farm with a lonely white house on it, with windows in black frames, which looked as if they should have been in a jail—and he had got the steward's place at Lord Kilgoff's for his old servant. Anyone would have thought it was my father that was to be pitied, and had lost his old place in the world, instead of being better off than ever he was, while the master was going to the bad. Well, my father and mother and myself went to live in the steward's house on Lord Kilgoff's place, ten miles nearer to Cork; and it was seldom we saw any of the family. Miss Bride and Miss Honor were just slips of girls then, but very pretty and gay, and they didn't seem to miss the big house at Kilmorey a bit. We were all young people when my fate came to me, and the fate of the young ladies came to them. I was a happy girl, and all the neighbours thought me a lucky one the day I was married to Michael Keene. He was a mate on board a fine merchant-ship, and he took me with him on his first voyage to Ceylon and Bombay. When I came back and went to see the old people, the first news I asked for was about the master and Mrs. O'Driscoll and the young ladies. And sad and sorrowful I was to hear that the master was an invalid, to be stretched on his sofa for the rest of his life. He had got a fall out hunting in the winter,—Lord Kilgoff always lent him a horse,—and he was never to be well again, the doctor said. I don't think it made much difference in his affairs whether he was well or ill, they were always going from bad to worse, and they kept on going the same gait now, and times

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were very hard for Mrs. O'Driscoll. She had one comfort, however, and it was a big one. The young ladies were both married: Miss Bride to an English captain she met at Lord Kilgoff's—Michael and I had seen Captain Conyers, and guessed how things were before we went away—and Miss Honor to a gentleman she met when she went to England with her sister. He was an Englishman too, but he lived in France, being English consul at a great city in this country.

'And Mrs. O'Driscoll, mother,' said I, when I had heard so much of the story, 'and Master Murrrough—how are they? He must be a fine boy by this time.'

'Fine enough,' said my mother shortly. 'Last week Mrs. O'Driscoll was in Cork, and she stopped here maybe an hour. She looks very ill, Kate—very drawn and pale and tired. And well she may, if all I hear is true.'

'What do you hear, mother?' I asked.

'The master can't see to anything, and she has it all to do, and to try and keep him quiet, and his mind easy into the bargain. And times are bad with everyone this year. I think Mrs. O'Driscoll was trying to get some money from Lawyer Plunkett that day she was here; and they say she couldn't get on at all if it was not for Mr. Purdon, the gentleman that Miss Honor's married to. He's as good as a son to her, I'm told.'

I was grieved to hear this account; and when I heard that Mrs. O'Driscoll had condescended to say that she hoped I and my husband would go and see her, I was proud to think of going, of course; but, somehow, I dreaded it too. Anyhow, we went; and no one would have been able to think of the difference between Kilmorey and the lone white house that saw how the Master and Mrs. O'Dris-

coll received us. They were of the real old sort, and they never forgot it, or acted out of it; and O'Donoghue's castle or a mud cabin was all one to them. Mrs. O'Driscoll saw us first in a bare little parlour looking out on the gravel walk; and after a few minutes she said we must come with her to see the Master. So we went upstairs, and in the room that matched the parlour we saw him. He was lying on a little old sofa, with a horse-hair cushion under his head, and he wore a long gray dressing-gown. I had not seen the Master for two years, and he looked ten years older than when I saw him last. But he was very handsome still, and the smile was on his face yet, or came there the minute he saw us. He was very gay and pleasant about himself, and said there were many worse things in life than lying on a sofa always, and being taken the best of care of by everybody. Michael did not agree with him; and Mrs. O'Driscoll looked at me mournfully, and smiled. How well I remember that she moved nearer to him after a little while, and touched his hair, which was turning thin and gray, with her hand. I may as well say here that I had never thought, until Michael, on our way home, spoke to me about it, of how beautiful a woman Mrs. O'Driscoll was. She was a young woman even then—certainly not more than thirty-five. She had married unusually young, even for a southern Irish girl, and she did not, with all the care she had had, look her age. She was rather tall, and very slight, with the lightest, most elegant figure I ever saw, the most graceful walk, and the most beautiful hands. Her features were regular and delicate; her eyes, a light hazel, were gentle in their expression, and deeply set, always, even in her best days, a little sad; but

her hair was her greatest beauty. It was as fine as cobweb, as glossy as the sheeniest silk, in colour it was a rich chestnut brown, and it fell around her head and on her neck in literal showers of shining curls. I never saw such curls. I never saw anything so beautiful as the rippling line of the hair all over the head, on which the light would play like moonbeams on the crest of the sparkling waves. Her daughters were pretty girls, but neither was to be compared to their mother; I have never seen anyone who was to be compared with her. But—I suppose it was because I had been accustomed to see her, and she was the mother of girls who were in a sort of way my playfellows, and I had therefore never realised how young she was—I had never thought much of Mrs. O'Driscoll's beauty until Michael asked me several questions about her, and I discovered that it was a kind of revelation to my blunt, honest, seafaring husband. When we had been a little while in the room with the Master and Mrs. O'Driscoll, we heard the sound of rapid footsteps on the stairs, and presently Master Murrough burst into the room, crying out, 'See here, papa, I have hurt myself horribly with my salmon spear;' and without taking any notice of us he ran up to his father's sofa, and held out his left hand, which was bleeding profusely. The father and mother occupied themselves with the boy, and left me and Michael full time to observe him at our leisure. Master Murrough was much younger than either of his sisters—at this time he could not have been more than twelve years old; and he was like both father and mother. He was not tall for his age, and his figure was slight, graceful, and easy, like Mrs. O'Driscoll's, from whom he had also inherited a refined outline of face, and beautiful wavy chestnut

hair. But the bold, piercing, bright black eyes were like his father's, and the rich musical voice had the ring of the Master's in it.

But Master Murrough never had his father's smile, nor his father's temper to produce it; he had a nervous irritable face always, and he was of a gloomy turn, even when quite a child.

When the cut had been plastered up, and Master Murrough had spoken in the careless, high-handed way he always had to Michael and me, and gone off probably to devise some other means of incurring bodily peril, the injury to his hand was spoken of. Mrs. O'Driscoll thought (because her husband would therefore dismiss the matter from his memory) that the wound was of no moment whatever; in fact would be quite right in the morning.

'It will leave an ugly scar,' said the Master, 'or I am very much mistaken. It is an ugly crooked cut, and will mark him.'

'That does not matter,' said Mrs. O'Driscoll, 'as he is not a young lady; though he has a pretty little hand, too,' she added.

Soon after the car called for Michael and me, and we went away. I never saw the Master again, and I did not see Mrs. O'Driscoll for many years.

Master Murrough was a handsome boy then; but he had a proud distant manner and a sullen look, which he did not take from his parents. My father used to say he was like a brother of the Master's, who died long ago in the Indies. Anyhow, the hearts of both father and mother were set on the boy. He had a look of the mother, too, in the shapely head; and, above all, his hair was like hers—just the same in colour, and in the 'sit' of it on the head. He was small of his age, but very hardy, and as active as a deer. His lessons did



not get on well; they told me the boy was very unruly, and his own way was the only one they could get him to walk in, young as he was.

'I never knew a child so fond of old stories and old songs,' my mother said, when, that night, she and I and Michael and my father were talking of the family, and she had been telling Michael how different times had once been with them in the old days at Kilmorey. 'He would go any distance to hear them; and there's not an old woman in the country round but has Master Murrough for a visitor, nor a song nor a story of the Rebellion he doesn't know. I never knew such a young 'Tory.' We do not mean in Ireland what I believe English people mean by a 'Tory,' and when my mother said that, I perfectly understood what kind of boy Master Murrough was, and the trouble he was likely to give Mrs. O'Driscoll.

When Michael went away that time, he took me with him; and by the time our voyage to China and back was over, I had neither father nor mother to come to. They both died of the fever; and it was Father Flynn, the parish priest, himself, that wrote to me when Michael's ship came to Liverpool, that there was no use in spending my little money in coming home; and, indeed, there was not. A friend I had in the townland wrote to me all particulars, and told me about all the changes in the family as well. The Master was dead, and there was very little left for Master Murrough. The property was nearly all gone, and Mrs. O'Driscoll had nothing but a little remnant of her own fortune; there must have been some law-work when they were married that tied that up, or she would have spent every penny of it on the Master. She was living in the lone house yet, herself and Master Murrough and a gentleman

who was teaching the boy—a middle-aged man, and a great scholar, but the most eccentric man possible, and a rebel in his heart if ever there was one. He had a map of the old properties, and he had written on the back of it all the confiscations and changes, and every kind of injury that had ever been done to the old families, and not a name had he for Lord Clare but Judas Iscariot; and it was through seeing this map, and talking to Mr. Shanahan about the Saxons and the Celts, and for ever reading the old poetry and the old stories, that Master Murrough took it into his head he must have him for his tutor. So Dan Shanahan was at the lone house, and my heart ached for Mrs. O'Driscoll: the Master gone from her, and Master Murrough going his own gait, which I knew was not a safe one in those times, for the country was exceedingly disturbed, and there was nothing but discontent everywhere. The Young Irelanders had been succeeded by other political agitators, and in our part of the country they were particularly busy. Wherever mischief of that sort was up, Dan Shanahan was certain to be in it, and he would be equally certain to bring Master Murrough—then nearly sixteen, and inclined that way from his childhood—into it too. In everything but his wild notions of the wrongs of Ireland, and his wilder schemes for the righting of them, Dan Shanahan was more than harmless. He was the gentlest soul alive, full of feeling for the poor and the sorrowful, and such a master of all kinds of odd out-of-the-way learning, that he was quite a famous person in our part of the country. As a boy, he was a great favourite with the Master, and Master Murrough doated on him from the time he was a child. The discontent was by no means confined to the lower

orders, and there were many of Master Murrough's own class, and of fortunes almost as fallen as his, to join him and encourage him in his dangerous ways.

I felt very sorry for Mrs. O'Driscoll, and sorrier still when another letter told me that Miss Bride and her husband, Captain Conyers, had been in Ireland, and a quarrel had taken place between the brothers-in-law. This was some time after I came to Liverpool, for I stayed there nearly a year; and then, Michael being at sea, I went to live at Portsmouth, which was the seaport he would land at next; and I did not hear any news of my old home for many a long day. I had troubles of my own, and I daresay I forgot other people: all the near ties were broken, and Ireland was getting dreamlike to me. I liked my English home; and the people, who were strange at first, were very friendly after a while. We were doing pretty well, too. Michael had a share in several trading ventures, and there was plenty to keep house upon, and a little to put by, and the little grew into more and more. We had Irish notions about our savings, though we had so little hold on Ireland—Michael, a man almost all whose life was passed on the sea, and I, who had not kith nor kin left in the old country. So when we heard how an Irish Member of Parliament was growing into a great man, and setting up banks, and making a fortune for himself and other people, we thought he was the man for our money; and so he was, but not quite as we intended it. All that Michael could save out of what he made we sent to Ireland; and when we read about the grand schemes that were on foot, and how the country was going to be made into a kind of rich heaven by the Member of Parliament and his friends,

we felt quite proud of having our little share in anything for the honour and the good of Ireland. I suppose, ladies and gentlemen, I need not tell you any more of that part of my story. I need not explain to you how it is that I am a stewardess, what became of my husband's savings, and how he carried on that last voyage of his a broken heart.

We had no children; and I think I should have taken the ruin that came upon us—when it came in much more terrific shape to the thousands at home whom the great frauds left penniless, and in that of despair and suicide to the prime mover of the swindle—tolerably calmly, at all events. When I saw the effect it had on Michael, it of course had no power of itself to grieve me—all I could feel was felt about him; and when I knew that he was dead thousands of miles away from me—not buried in the sea, though; he died in a hospital at San Francisco, and lies in a burying-ground like those at home—I really did not care that the money was gone too. What good could it have done me?

Soon, however, I began to wish to get home—to Ireland, I mean; and I had the means of doing that, but I went no farther than Dublin. Michael's captain found me out there, and was a kind friend to me. He offered to try and get me a place on board one of the fine new steamers then being built for the Irish-Channel service, and I gladly accepted his offer. The little money I had was nearly exhausted, and I had begun to find out how difficult it is for women to stand alone—how easily they are beaten down in the crowd of strugglers for life, even women of my class, who can turn their hands to many kinds of work. I had given up the hope of seeing my own part of the country again; I could not

afford the journey. I wanted to see the graves where my father and mother lay, but I knew that I should never see Michael's grave; and after that it was almost easy to give up seeing theirs.

In a few weeks the new boats were ready, and I made my first trip as a stewardess on board, as I have already said, the finest of them.

One beautiful evening in the summer of that year, a lady came down the stair and into the ladies' saloon, whom I instantly recognised as Miss Honor O'Driscoll that was, now Mrs. Purdon. It was at Kingstown, and she had arrived by a train before the regular passenger service, and I was alone when she came in. It had such an effect on me to see her, it brought such a rush of recollections to my mind, that I could not speak for a minute, but stood staring at her, while she held out her travelling-bag for me to take, and asked me if she could have a sofa on the side where she should not feel the pitching of the ship. As I did not answer, she looked at me sharply, and exclaiming, 'Why, I do believe it's Kate!' caught hold of me in her old hearty way, and was almost as much overcome as I was. The boat was not crowded that evening, and we had a splendid passage, the sea as calm as a lake, and daylight giving place only to brilliant moonlight. Most of the ladies remained on deck, and those who did not gave me very little trouble. I had time for a long, occasionally interrupted, talk with Miss Honor. She had plenty to tell me about herself, which I need not repeat. She was perfectly happy; and she gave me a description of her husband which might have suited an archangel. She was going home now, having been on a visit to her mother. When I eagerly asked for news of

the family, Miss Honor's bright face clouded over, and the sweet tone of her voice changed,—she spoke a little oddly, as if the French tongue had got mixed up with her talk—and I knew the account I was going to hear was not pleasant. Her mother, she said, was changed; she was beautiful still, as indeed she always must be, but her health was indifferent, and she was anxious and grieved about Master Murrough. I asked how he had grown up, and what he was doing. Just nothing, his sister said, and that was one of his mother's griefs. Her only son had not turned out according to her hopes. 'He is not dissipated, Kate,' said Miss Honor, 'and he is always loving to her; but he is moody and strange, and O, so unlike poor papa! As to the property, it is next to nothing now; but that does not trouble Murrough, or if it does trouble him, it is only by making him brood over the past. He lives in it, I think, and nothing will rouse him out of his queer ways. He goes nowhere, except among the poor people; he never has a friend of his own inside the house, except Dan Shanahan, who is still living there; but he goes away from home a great deal, no one but Dan knows where. My mother has no just reason to reproach him for these absences. He does not spend money—the little there is she has the control of; but he will not explain them—only he tells her the time will come when she will understand and approve their object. Mamma told me all this in her letters, and my husband sent me to see her, to offer to bring her and Murrough to France, where he will undertake to find occupation for him that need not hurt his pride. But I might as well try to take Spike Island home with me as Murrough, and to move

the Galtees as to get mamma to leave him; and I have to go home just as wretched about them both as I came. What can it be, Kate?

'It is just the old story, Miss Honor,' I said. 'Dan Shanahan was always a rebel, and he turned Master Murrough's head long ago, and it's just that the pair of them are up to.'

'I suppose it is,' she said, with a sigh; 'and though I don't pretend to be shocked—for what I am not Irish I am French, and there's not a touch of English about me—I am very, very sorry, and very uneasy, for we are beginning to hear odd stories from America since the Phoenix business was put down—and, Kate, I am morally certain Dan Shanahan had a hand in *that*—and if anything is done or attempted in Ireland by those madmen, be sure Murrough will get into mischief, and then what will become of mamma?'

'She's wrapped up in him, isn't she, Miss Honor?'

'Indeed she is. God knows she loved *us*, Bride and me, well enough, and let us have our own way in everything, as you remember, Kate; but we were nothing to her in comparison to what Murrough is. She had papa with her then, you see, and of course it is very different now there is nothing *here* to divide her heart with her boy. She was delighted to see me, but it wore off in a few days; and I do believe she was glad when I left her, because she could not conceal her uneasiness about Murrough and his queer doings from me.'

'And Miss Bride?' I asked.

'They quarrelled, Kate; think of that! Captain Conyers, a thorough Englishman, and Murrough could not get on together. He could not endure the idleness, as he

called it, in which Murrough lived. He could not understand "poetic poverty;" and he said just that to Murrough one day, and there was a tremendous row. Murrough spoke of Captain Conyers as a "foreigner," and the captain laughed at him; he was quite a boy then, and *that* was not the way to cure him. So they did not speak to each other hardly; and then Bride meddled in it, and took Captain Conyers' part, and she and mamma had high words, for the first time in their lives; and O, Kate, it is all very miserable.'

I fully agreed with her that it was, and the story made me very sad. The years during which the Master had been laid by had told against the son. I asked Miss Honor if her brother were still as handsome as he had been when a lad, and she answered that he was far handsomer. 'He is very like mamma,' she said; 'much more so than he was, for her face is very sad now, and she seldom smiles; and he has just the same look; but his face is bright too, in a strange way; and it has the loftiest look I ever saw—the sort of look one fancies a poet ought to have. He is delightful, I think, with all his queer uncertain ways; a man who would become greatness. There's a poem in a book he loves, about "The true Irish King," and Murrough reminds me of it somehow, though he is rather small and delicate—especially of one line in it—"Like his blemishless honour and vigilant will." But he will never be a happy man, I'm afraid; and I am going home with a very, very heavy heart.'

'Has he a sweetheart, Miss Honor?' said I. 'Nothing would turn him so soon off any of these notions as falling in love. And there must be many a young lady about Kilmorey who would be proud to be courted by Murrough O'Driscoll.'

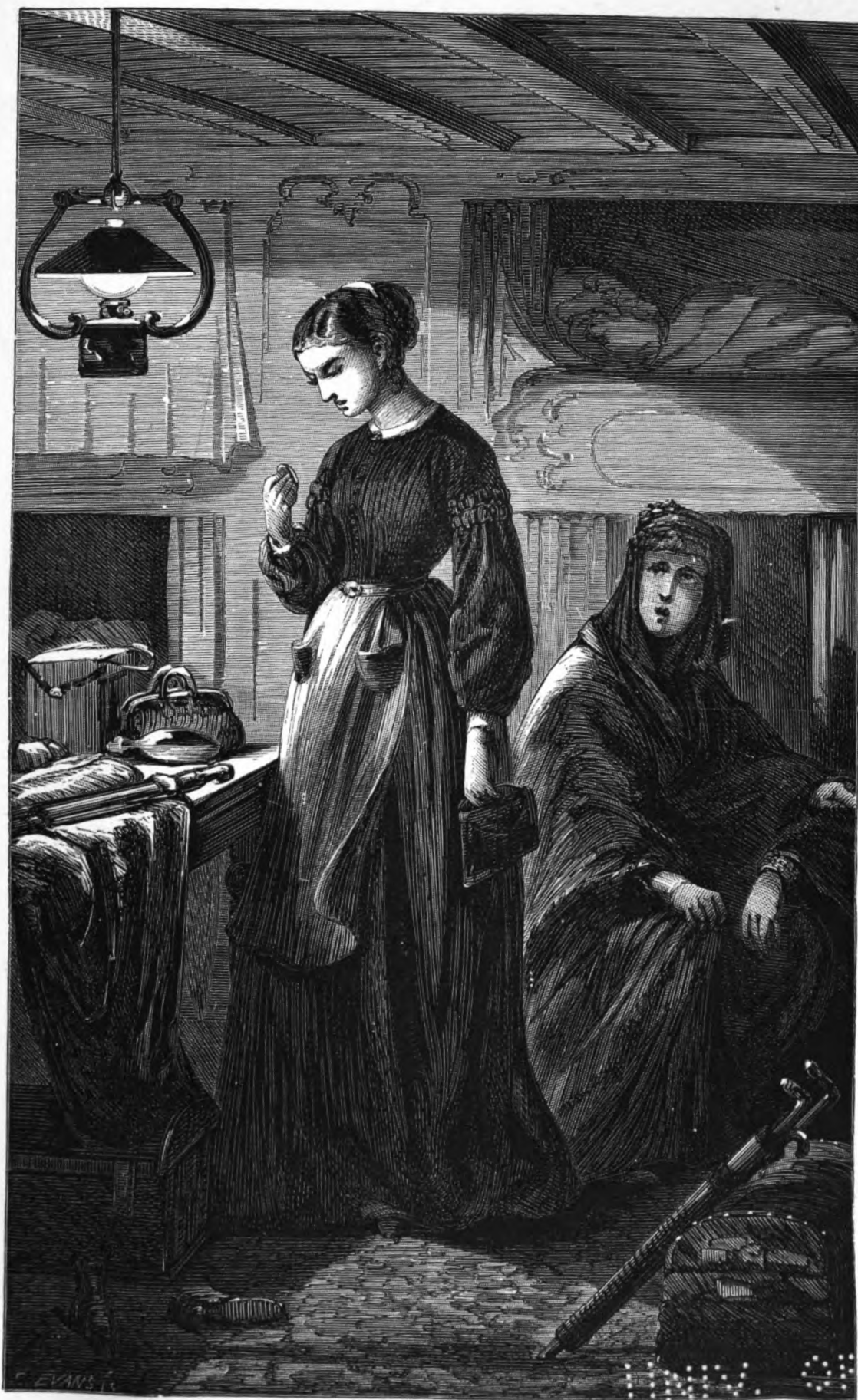
Miss Honor laughed.

'Your notions are almost as foolish as his own, Kate,' she said. 'I fancy there are very few young ladies who would care to pass their lives at the "lone house," as we used to call it. I don't think there's even the one who would be needed to do us that service. At all events, if there is, Murrough does not know it. No, there's nothing of that kind to divert his mind.'

During the short time of the passage to Holyhead, Miss Honor and I talked of many other things, but we constantly recurred to the subject of Master Murrough; and when we reached Holyhead, and she bade me farewell, saying, if she did not succeed in inducing her mother and brother to go to France, of which she despaired, she should come to Ireland the following year, she left me with a sadder heart than I was wont to carry.

For many days after that my memory was busy with Kilmorey, and the time of my childhood, and I often wondered whether I should ever chance to see the second of the two pretty sisters again. She might be coming across, as Miss Honor had been,—for I did not think much of the quarrel between the captain and Master Murrough; I had no doubt it would soon be made up. The subject did not fade out of my mind soon. Very shortly after I had seen Miss Honor, rumours began to stir about a movement in America set on foot by some people who called themselves Fenians; and though everybody laughed at them and their projects, it was not denied that certain classes of the Irish people were beginning to be watched rather anxiously, and that the times were such that it behoved loyal persons to make their loyalty evident. I daresay nobody heard Fenianism more talked about than I did. People going backwards

and forwards between England and Ireland discussed it very frequently and freely, and after a while it ceased to be regarded as a mere laughing matter. I never heard the subject mentioned that I did not think of Murrough O'Driscoll and his mother. There was no one in my old home to give me any information about the state of things there. Public report spoke badly of all the district; it was poor, unruly, disaffected. But no names had yet been mentioned, and I had seen that an insinuation made by one of the Dublin newspapers, that the Fenians were not without sympathisers among the poorer gentry, was indignantly repelled by the local press. Time went on, and the trouble and uneasiness increased, and I heard more and more of it as I crossed and recrossed the Channel; and the people we took over from Holyhead to Kingstown were full of compassion for the presumably miserable condition of the Irish residents, and the people whom we brought back again were full of surprise at everybody taking it all so quietly. The whole thing had a sort of dreamlike effect on me. I did not remain sufficiently long in any place to realise that a kind of rebellion was going on in Ireland, and that men were being arrested, tried, and punished for political offences of the same sort as those I had heard spoken of when I was a girl at home, when my father used to tell Master Murrough stories of the Rebellion, and the atrocities perpetrated by the rebels and by the yeomanry. I suppose we never realise that anything which has interested us very painfully, or shocked us very deeply, can be reproduced in our own days; and beyond hoping, when I heard that Fenianism was supposed—for nobody seemed to have positive information—to be







rampant in my own part of the country, that Master Murrough would not get himself into trouble, I really thought very little about it. It was in vain I heard repeated on all sides that this Fenian insanity was mere blackguardism, rowdism, without the smallest infusion of the gentlemanly element which had never previously been wanting in the history of Irish insurrection. That did not reassure me. Proud and distant as he was, I felt somehow sure that the pupil of Dan Shanahan, if he could not procure gentlemanly rebellion, would join the roughest and the rowdiest, rather than none. Sometimes I thought of writing to Mrs. O'Driscoll; but I did not do it. I put it off, and so it came to be among those things which are only thought of, not done. Miss Honor had told me she would let her mother know about our meeting; and though I knew how good and kind Mrs. O'Driscoll was to everybody, I did not suppose her own troubles would have left much time or much heart to care about what had become of us.

Things now became increasingly threatening; and the rumours which the passengers from England discussed every morning and evening gained in seriousness and in the appearance of truth. That a number of American Irish had landed at various ports in Ireland, and were diligently pursuing the propagandism of rebellion, there was no doubt; and even those who had been most incredulous were obliged to acknowledge that Fenianism was something more than an intangible craze, putting the government to immense cost, and disturbing by some nameless element of distrust all the social relations of Ireland. In all that transpired, the County Cork had prominent mention; and the very district in which my old home lay

was indicted as a nest of disaffection.

At length the storm burst, and I need not repeat to you, ladies and gentlemen, the events which rapidly succeeded each other, until the escape of the notorious Stephens from Mountjoy Prison raised public feeling and apprehension to fever heat. After that time, the boats were watched with the closest vigilance. They had been watched before more or less; but then, and for a long time afterwards, the scrutiny to which they were subjected was of regular recurrence. At first I disliked this state of things very much, and felt nervously uneasy lest the scene of my prosaic labours should become historical by a struggle and a capture. But nothing of the kind occurred; and by degrees I ceased to mind it. The faces of the detectives became quite familiar to me,—one of them was a very good-natured-looking man, whose features expressed supreme guilelessness, so that I always wondered how he could have adopted his terrible profession,—and I ceased to feel any solicitude about their movements. The good-natured man's name was Cooper, and he was very civil to me, and as little unpleasant in the discharge of his functions as might be. He crossed with us so often at that time that I am sure he must have been nearly as used to the passage as I was, and must have found it as hard to believe in anything occurring to break in upon such a monotonous existence.

One evening I had come on board at Kingstown harbour a little after my usual time, and I had not quite finished the arrangement of the saloon to my liking, when the passenger express came rattling alongside, and the tramp of many feet on deck told me that the passengers were coming on board. I was in the ladies' cabin,

and happened to be standing before a large glass placed over the mantelshelf, which reflects all that passes at the door and in the passage at the foot of the stair which communicates with the gentlemen's cabin; and I had just seen—at the crooked angle at which one sees everyone's face but one's own in a mirror—the good-humoured countenance of Cooper uplifted towards the stair, down which the passengers would presently come, with a charming expression of disinterested, non-expectant, non-inquisitive interest, when I heard a lady's voice say: 'Are you sure? They told me it was the Durham.' 'No, ma'am,' returned the person addressed, who was the steward; 'the Durham met with a slight accident yesterday, and the Cumberland is put on instead.'

There was no reply, and I went to the door. There was Cooper in the narrow passage, the steward, as fussy as usual, halfway up the stairs, and just above him, followed by a boy carrying some shawls and a bandbox, were two ladies. I had only time to see that they were both closely veiled, and that one leaned, as an invalid might do, on the arm of the other, when they descended the remaining stairs and entered the cabin. Cooper had moved aside to give them convenient space to pass, but he instantly resumed his former position.

It is so customary for every lady who is going to cross to address me as soon as she makes her appearance, either by a question or an order, that I think I should have taken particular notice of these ladies, for no other reason than that neither of them spoke to me. One sat down on the nearest sofa, while the other took the shawls and the bandbox from the boy, and, having placed them beside her companion, paid and dismissed him.

'You had better lie down at

once, dear,' she said; and the two crossed the wide cabin, and took possession of a sofa at the farthest extremity from the door.

'You will not have much air there, ladies,' I said; 'if you are not good sailors, I advise you to take a better place. You are the first down and have your choice.'

'Thank you,' replied the lady who had spoken before; 'we shall do very well here.'

She did not turn her head as she spoke, nor did she raise her veil. At that moment several ladies came in, and, as I busied myself with them, a strange thought crossed my mind. It was that I hoped the ladies who had come in first had no reason for wishing to keep their faces hidden; for I knew, as certainly as I knew I could see my own face in the glass, that Cooper would see them before they disembarked at Holyhead. It was a strange and idle thought, but it recurred to me when I had made all the necessary arrangements for the comfort of the passengers, and had seen Cooper abandon his post in the passage and betake himself to the deck. By that time we were steaming rapidly away—were out of the harbour, and gliding out of sight of the Golden Spears.

I went towards the far end of the cabin, and found one of the ladies lying down; her bonnet had been removed, and was replaced by a cashmere hood, of the kind the French call *capeline*, exactly like one which Miss Honor had worn when she crossed with me; and a handkerchief was lightly thrown over the upper part of her face, which was turned away. Her figure could hardly be discerned, so carefully was she wrapped up by her companion, who sat quite still, with her face covered with one hand under her veil, at the feet of the recumbent figure, leaning back in an angle of the wall. People take all sorts of

odd and uncomfortable attitudes when they are on board a ship, and it is wonderful how long some persons will sit perfectly motionless under the apprehension of seasickness, or in the endurance of a particular phase of it. The one lady sat, and the other lay, still and silent; and as certain of my ladies were fanciful and troublesome, though the night was calm, and we were making a capital run, I did not think more about these two.

When we were within an hour of Holyhead, I was requested, for the tenth time at least, to hand her travelling-bag to a lady who had already exhausted the resources of book, fan, brandy and soda-water, newspaper, scent-bottle, and smelling-salts, and who was now about to recommence them; and as I replaced the bag upon the table, my attention was caught by an object which I had seen before. It was a miniature set as a brooch, and it was attached to a shawl which lay on the table. The impulse to take it up and look at it attentively was too strong to be resisted. I had seen it many and many a time. Miss Bride and Miss Honor and I had admired it as an unequalled work of art. It was a likeness of the Master, and in the old times Mrs. O'Driscoll had always worn it. I lifted it up to the light, and looked eagerly at it, and as I did so, a sound like a very faint but quite irrepressible groan reached my ears. I looked round and saw in the figure seated at the feet of the mutilled lady, her veil raised, her hands clasped and pressed convulsively upon her knees, her face deadly pale, and with a look of despair in it that was frightful to see—Mrs. O'Driscoll!

I stood perfectly still, not only in the surprise of the moment, but also because I was thrilled with a sudden shapeless fear. I could

not have told why I did not instantly rush to her side before the finger which she stealthily raised as a warning checked me; why my first impulse was to glance around and observe with thankfulness that all the other passengers were either asleep, or too much occupied with their own sensations to take any notice of us. Why had she taken no notice of me? Why had she tried to avoid me? Why was she looking so dreadful? What had happened? Countless questions of this kind rushed through my mind during the few moments in which I looked at the still beautiful face, which turned upon me a gaze of anguish I never can forget, before she said in a faint voice,

‘Stewardess!’

Then I went to her, but quietly, in a business-like fashion, for her gesture and her voice warned me that I was to claim no knowledge of her openly.

‘Please help me to lie down,’ she said aloud; and, as I adjusted her dress, she strongly pressed my hand, and whispered,

‘I tried to avoid you, to come by another boat. Honor told me you were in this. O, Kate, have mercy on me; don’t betray me.’

All this time, but in reality it was only a few moments, her companion lay quite still.

‘Betray you? I whispered, close to her ear; ‘I don’t know what you mean. Why should you not be here? Why should you not be known?’

‘Because, because—O my God, what shall I do?’

At this moment I was called by a lady at the other end of the cabin.

‘I will be back in a minute,’ I whispered to Mrs. O'Driscoll. I would not have believed it possible that two persons could have spoken so low, and have heard and been heard so perfectly. I

attended to the lady who had called me, and returned, carrying a glass of water, to Mrs. O'Driscoll.

'You're a bad sailor, ma'am,' I said aloud; 'drink a little water, you're faint;' and then, when I raised her head on my arm, and held the water to her lips, I whispered again,

'What is it? Can I do anything?'

'Is the boat watched, Kate?'

'Watched! For what?'

'For—for Fenians; for people they suspect?'

A terrible fear smote my heart. I was kneeling beside her, my back was turned to the figure stretched upon the sofa near me. Involuntarily I turned half round, but she caught my arm, and I stopped myself. Her eyes met mine with an agonised entreaty in them too dreadful to bear.

'Yes.'

I said no more. She had known it, she must have known it, but she lay for a moment like one dead, and her hand dropped off my arm.

I rose from my knees. I did not dare to remain longer in so unusual an attitude, and as I did so she caught my dress. A man was in the cabin, quietly walking along the range of sofas, and looking earnestly, but not disrespectfully, into the faces of the occupants, much to the surprise, disgust, and indignation of some among them, while others took the proceeding quite quietly, apparently under the impression that the intruder was the customary official charged with the collection of the tickets. One lady in particular—she had spectacles, a snub nose, a 'front,' and wore the scantiest linsey dress I ever saw, so that I had concluded from the first she was strong-minded, and a habitual traveller—exclaimed fiercely, 'Go and ask my husband

for the tickets, man; do you suppose I have them?' Cooper gave her a look of amused incredulity, and passed on. He was coming near me, and the grasp on my dress was tightened, while I saw that the muffled figure on the sofa was shaken by a strange thrill. It moved, the face was turned still more away from the light, and one arm was laid across the breast, probably to keep down its throbs, while a thin dry hand drew some of the wraps more closely about the neck. My eyes fell upon the hand; it was marked with a rugged scar which went deep into the side of the palm, and was continued across the back for an inch or more—'*an ugly crooked cut*' had made it.

Cooper was within two sofas of where the wrapped-up figure lay.

'How are your ladies getting on, Mrs. Keene?' said he.

'Very well, except this one.' I returned quietly; and I took the marked hand in mine, and passed my arm under the head, which fell back with a ready adaptation to circumstances. 'This lady is the worst sailor we have had for ever so long; not that she's sea-sick exactly, but that she's so dreadfully faint. There, that's it; perhaps you would put your hand to her back while I lift her head up, and try to make her drink some water. Thank you, that's capital.'

The fainting lady drank the water, and Mr. Cooper dutifully held her up. 'It is the want of air that makes her so bad,' I said in a fustily confidential tone; 'but she chose this sofa, and has never been able to move from it since we started.'

'Poor thing,' said Mr. Cooper tenderly; 'she seems very delicate. Do you know her, Mrs. Keene?'

'O yes,' I answered carelessly, 'I've seen her many times. The face is quite familiar to me.'

'The small cabin in the deck-saloon is empty,' said Mr. Cooper; 'if you could get her up there, she would have more air.'

'Very true,' I said, 'but I don't think I could manage it alone.'

'Never mind, I'll help you,' said Mr. Cooper. 'Now, ma'am, the ship is quite steady—just you lean on me and Mrs. Keene, and you will be in the fresh air in no time.'

I placed the shawl which had covered the muffled figure carefully round it, drawing it over the left arm, and covering the left hand the moment I released it from mine; Mr. Cooper gallantly drew the right arm through his. I followed closely, carrying water and smelling-salts.

So we three left the cabin, whose other occupants raised themselves on their elbows, and looked after us with as much interest and sympathy as anybody can be expected to feel for anybody else on board a steamer. I did not so much as glance at Mrs. O'Driscoll, who lay quite still. God knows what terror she passed through in those few minutes; for of course she had learned from my words and movements that the moment of peril was upon them, and Cooper the person they had to dread.

Very slowly we ascended the stair, and as we neared the top the fainting lady said in a feeble voice, 'Thank you, I am much better.' We crossed the deck-saloon, and entered the private cabin. There was but one pillow on the sofa, on which we placed the invalid in a sitting posture. I remarked this in a tone of annoyance, 'And I can't leave her to get one,' said I. Mr. Cooper's readiness to oblige was quite equal to the occasion. He would fetch the pillow the lady had had in the cabin. As he went downstairs again, I said in a quick whisper, 'Where are your gloves?' The answer was made in a tone of utmost bewilderment: 'I don't

know—I must have dropped them.'

'Here's a pair of mine; they are not too small—I remember that—put them on quickly—if there's any description of you aboard this boat to-night, that mark is in it.'

I stood in the doorway. No one could see the figure in the small cabin. In another minute Cooper returned, bringing the pillow. 'Thank you very much,' I said; 'she will do nicely now.' I made all the arrangements for the invalid's comfort rapidly and silently, and then left the cabin; and saying to Mr. Cooper, with rather a discontented air, 'I can't spend all my time over *one*,' I went down again. I saw him pass through the door of the deck-saloon on to the deck as I did so.

I need not attempt to describe what I felt while this little scene was going on; in fact I could not describe it. I knew nothing, but I guessed all. I had had no time to learn anything, not a minute in which to turn over in my mind what I should do, when the moment of danger had come. Was it past? There was nothing but impulse in my conduct. I did not know what Murrough O'Driscoll had done. I knew he was flying in disguise from the law. I believed I was incurring peril in aiding him, or rather his mother, and I did not mind doing so. If harm came to me, it could not be helped; and what could it be in comparison with the deadly peril in which he must stand if this scheme, which seemed so desperate, were to fail? The one word his mother had said, 'Fenians,' would have been enough for me if all my previous knowledge of Master Murrough's character, and the uneasy forebodings I had always felt, had not sufficed to guide me to a general reading of this riddle. That Murrough O'Driscoll could come under peril of the

law for any ordinary, vulgar, disgraceful breach of it, never occurred to me as a possibility for a moment. This was folly, insanity, anything of that kind anyone might choose to call it; but not disgraceful. A little courage, a little endurance, and he and his wretched mother, whose life must indeed be a burden to her for love for him, would be safe.

What good could it do to anyone that they should take the poor young fellow? That he should get quietly away from the chance of doing or being done any more mischief was the best thing that could happen to him. I thought all this afterwards. I don't pretend to say I thought it then, or that there was anything in my mind but pain for the mother's anguish, but sickening suspense and fear, which effectually banished curiosity, which seemed to shut up all my faculties in the compass of the present hour and scene.

She was sitting up again when I went down, leaning back in the angle formed by the two sofas, her hands clasped in the former attitude, her lips moving, and her eyes closed. As I approached she opened them and looked at me, then shut them again, as though she could bear no more.

'We shall soon be in, ladies,' I said; and began in a bustling fashion to gather together the paraphernalia which strewed the tables. When quite close to her, I said:

'All is safe so far. Don't try to speak to me; don't try to explain anything which would disturb your composure.'

'That dreadful man!' she murmured.

'He has not a suspicion; all will be right.'

'To think that I tried to avoid you, Kate—to think how frightened I was when I heard the Cumberland was crossing to-night! How can I ever—'

'Hush! not a word that will agitate you. Where are you going?'

'To Honor; she provided me with the means of doing this. She always dreaded it.'

'And Miss Bride?'

'Her husband has just been ordered to Cork in consequence of the state of the country. Think of *that*, Kate, and all that it might have meant!'

'Hush! no more. Write to me, care of "Father Flynn."'

I placed her shawl round her, and fastened it with the brooch which had betrayed her, and then I was involved in all the bustle of our arrival.

'Five minutes, ladies,' said the steward, appearing for an instant at the cabin-door, with a probably final flask of soda-water in his hand. 'Rather late, are we not?' asked a tired passenger in a cross voice; while several gave utterance to the disgust with which they regarded the 'run' up to London. Then they began to disperse, and I signed to Mrs. O'Driscoll to join the departing throng. A light drizzling rain was falling, and the ladies were huddled together in the deck-saloon. I came up with Mrs. O'Driscoll's bandbox in my hand, and her shawls on my arm. The door of the small cabin was open. The invalid was seated on the sofa. 'You had better not hurry to get ashore,' I said; 'there's plenty of time. I will send a boy with your things. Here is your bonnet, but you had better not put it on; you will find the hood much more comfortable in the train.'

They were standing arm-in-arm at the door of the deck-saloon, looking so like one another—the worn young face—worn with care and illness, for there was the danger signal on its hectic cheeks, its hollow temples, and its parched lips—when Mr. Cooper came up

behind me, so quietly that I quite started when he spoke :

‘Give me those things, Mrs. Keene; I will see the ladies into the train.’

I saw that Mrs. O'Driscoll's face turned deadly pale; and for a moment I felt that all was lost. But there was nothing for it but to accept the offer.

The few minutes which intervened before the crowd of passengers began to move towards the gangways were moments of intense suffering, and marked, in addition to their suspense, by one incident which was the most trying that could have been imagined under the circumstances. As the crowd began to move, I, keeping close to Mrs. O'Driscoll and her companion, heard the following fragments of a conversation between two gentlemen — one of them a well-known Dublin lawyer, whose appearance was familiar to me—who were just before them.

‘— lurking about Cork, it is supposed. They're certain to take him. There's some hope that Shanahan may turn approver; and if so, his evidence will be invaluable.’

The start which I could not suppress, and my involuntary glance at the two faces close to the speakers, filled me with such confusion that I could not see whether Mrs. O'Driscoll and her companion had lost their presence of mind in the same way. The next moment and before I could recover myself, they were wedged into the throng. I hovered on the outskirts of the crowd, and saw all the passengers land. Almost the last came Mrs. O'Driscoll and her companion, escorted across the gangway by Mr. Cooper with grave politeness and in perfect good faith.

Dan Shanahan did not turn approver. I learned that from the

papers, and the search for Murrough O'Driscoll was soon abandoned. How he had escaped the hot pursuit which had been instituted on Dan Shanahan's arrest, no one knew. I don't think it occurred to anyone to take his mother's love and the courage of her despair into consideration.

You may be sure I looked anxiously for the letter Mrs. O'Driscoll had promised me. It was long in coming. Not for two months or more did I get it. Father Flynn wrote me a few lines at the same time. He said nothing about Mrs. O'Driscoll; but he told me Dan Shanahan would surely be convicted when he should be tried. The trial was put off for a good while, but he was convicted, and he is in some English prison now, and maybe does not know how it is with Murrough O'Driscoll and his mother.

The letter was a long one. I can tell you the very words of part of it; there was a great deal more, but it was about me chiefly; and I don't think it would be worth repeating.

‘My boy is dying fast,’ his mother wrote. ‘I knew it would be so even when we were at home. I knew he was not really strong, though he was so hardy. He could not stand the night drill in the mountains, the long cold journeys, the constant excitement, the watching and the waiting. He thought I did not know it, but I knew it—all about it; but what could I do? I could not turn him against the thing he believed in and was ready to die for; and if I had tried to do it, I might only have turned him against me. It was in his nature, and I could do nothing. He could not have lived, even if all had not failed; he had worn himself out before the end, no matter what it was to be, could have come. And now he is dying, as I had little



right to expect that I should see him die, with his mother and his sister beside him, instead of dying in an English prison, with an English gaoler over him. This is a nice place, though strange to me. I never was out of Ireland before, and I don't get used to it; but he seems at ease here. He never speaks of Ireland—no one would know he ever thought of it but me—but I know, Kate, I know; and when he sits for hours gazing at the sunshine—I never saw such bright sunshine as there is here—and then away over the hills and the fields—and his lips move, I know he's thinking of "the sunburst on the green." You would wonder if you saw how quietly I take it—I often wonder at it myself—but it is because, though the time must be short for him, it will be very little longer for me.'

And now, ladies and gentlemen, perhaps you wonder how, being a stewardess on board the Cumberland, of the Irish Channel service, you happen to meet me at Calais. The truth is, I have had a holiday, and I passed it with Miss Honor, in the handsome and prosperous French city where she and her husband and their two little children live. It was a happy time, though we were very quiet, for it is only three months since Mrs. O'Driscoll was laid beside her son, in the beautiful cemetery which is like a garden. Miss Honor

was very calm, and almost cheerful when I went to her; and when I wondered at that, knowing what her mother was to her, she said: 'It is I who wonder at you. Do you think I did not love her better than to want to keep her after Murrough?'

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'I don't believe she's a stewardess at all, not a bit of it,' said a surly passenger in a sealskin cap and angola gloves, to a timid and depressed female, evidently his wife, who sat bolt upright beside him. 'Very likely indeed, if she were, she would tell us *that* story. What's to prevent our giving information to the police? Why, ma'am, do you know what she has been guilty of?' he continued in a snarling whisper.

'No,' answered the depressed female.

'Felony, ma'am, — *that's* all; misprision of treason, ma'am. What do you think of *that*? And to suppose she would tell it! Pooh! don't talk such nonsense to *me*, ma'am. Stewardess indeed!'

'What do you suppose she *is*, then, dear?' said the timid lady.

'Suppose, ma'am! What do I *suppose*? Why, she's a humbug, ma'am, *that's* what *she is*. Stewardess indeed!'

And then the surly passenger snarled himself off into a snorting sleep.

### A STORY OF THE HILLS.

MORE than twenty years ago, said the angular lean-ribbed man, who all this time had been sitting away by himself, apparently taking no interest in anything, but who now came forward suddenly, speaking with a rapid utterance and in an abrupt manner, as men often do

speaking to whom talk is an unusual exercise—more than twenty years ago, he began, I went down to Cumberland for the first time, to visit my friend George Graham, of Whelpo. I was a London man, born and bred, living at home and studying for the bar, but consider-

ably bored by the trammels of a luxurious town life, and passionately desiring a way out into greater simplicity and country freedom. However, as my father expected to see me Lord Chancellor before he died, and as my mother thought nothing short of an earl's daughter good enough for me as a wife, there did not seem to be much chance of either simplicity or country freedom; and as I was the only son, it was undeniably my duty to wear my fetters as courageously as I could.

George Graham of Whelpo—somewhere at the back of all things near Ennerdale—had been my chum at Cambridge. He was a man of the rustic type—a broad-shouldered, athletic fellow, without a trace of the fine gentleman in him; for all that he was of the blue blood of his country, his family being one of the best and oldest in Cumberland. At first, indeed, I thought him too little of a fine gentleman, fresh as I was from the excessive refinement of my own home; but I soon learnt to love him the better for the Doric flavour there was about him. He seemed to have all that I wanted, and at times I believe I envied him for the very things that had at first repelled me. I was glad, therefore, when I received his letter inviting me to Whelpo; and the agreement was that I was to work my own way over from Windermere, Derwentwater, and Wastwater, to the wilds where the Grahams lived. 'All smooth sailing,' said George, to whom a stiff mountain-pass was as easy walking as a garden-path.

It was September when I went down—perhaps the finest month in the year for the mountains; and I was fascinated. The richness of colouring, the infinite variety of line, and the wonder of the lights and shadows, charmed me as I had never been charmed before. It

was an Armida's garden to me; but without its enchantress; and I remember the vague longing that I felt for some living representative of all this dumb beauty, and how at times my delight was almost pain for want of this human expression. This is not an unusual feeling with men when they first see the Lakes; and perhaps all great beauty, whether in art or nature, awakens the same desire for its human culmination.

I was going over from Wastwater by Black Sail. By this time I had learned to walk across the mountain-tops as if I had been born to them, and thought nothing of thirty miles or so between dawn and dusk. So I turned aside, and rambled over the crags about the Pillar as an episode in the day's work—no more. Whether there was some peculiarity in the atmosphere, or because the view was really one of the grandest I had seen, I do not know; but the remembrance of that day has always remained with me as something especially beautiful. The mixture of rugged fell-side, bronzed with bracken and purpled with heather—of distant mountain-tops, blue and misty—of fertile plains beyond the mountain chain—and of the glittering line of sea bounding all—was without a parallel. I felt taken away from ordinary life—as if in another world, where I would not have wondered at what might have happened.

I was sitting on a ledge of rocks, tufted with parsley fern, and netted over by the long-legged stag's-horn moss, when I first saw her. She came down from a higher level, like an apparition breaking the solitude, and the slanting rays of the sun caught her as she came, and made her into a lovely picture. Her dress was poor and common: a short brown skirt, with a blue cotton jacket showing her large

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round arms and white neck and throat, and a blue cotton sun-bonnet shading her face; but the sunlight laced the brown with gold, and deepened the shadows of the blue to purple, and made the dull red handkerchief covering the basket on her arm like a bit of costly Indian work;—like love, it took the sordid things of life, and made them into gorgeous regalities fit for kings to share. It touched the woman herself, too, and made her as beautiful as a goddess. The tall supple figure, slight and yet so strong; the bright crisp rings of yellow hair breaking about her neck and forehead; the straight Scandinavian face, fair and frank, with such a fearless look in the steady eyes, and such girlish sweetness about the fresh firm lips—I shall never forget her as she came over the mountain brow, with that strange look of home and harmony which only mountaineers have. She was like a verse of the *Nibelungen Lied* embodied. I could not see her as a mere peasant girl, born to do servile offices for hire, and with no rights but those which wealth and society allowed her. On the contrary, she looked to me as the mistress here; and I felt like a poor intruder.

She had to pass quite close to where I was sitting, and as she passed she looked at me frankly, but with as little boldness as shyness.

‘Good-day, sir,’ she said in a clear sweet voice, and the country accent running through it seemed rich rather than coarse.

I made some pretence of asking my way, to keep her with me for a few moments. She was too beautiful to part with easily, and it was too novel a sensation to me to stand there in that mountain solitude, with a creature who looked like a poem put into human shape, for indifference. And yet I felt almost ashamed of even such an in-

nocent ruse when I saw how frankly she gave in to it, and how she made it a matter of conscience and hospitality to set me straight. She was so young, too. With all her courage and quiet Northern dignity, she was just a mere girl; and perhaps all the more piquante in consequence.

After she had told me this thing and that—where I could find Robin Hood’s Chair on Crag Fell, and the cold pure spring of Jenny Crag Well, and Angler’s Rock, and the Island, and Bee Wall End on Revelin, and others of the notable things about Ennerdale, she suddenly pointed to a square, white, naked house, standing bleakly on the fell-side.

‘Yon’s Whelpo,’ she said; and as she spoke she blushed and laughed to herself lightly, as girls do laugh when they say something that gives them secret pleasure.

‘Ah, indeed!’ I answered; ‘I am going there.’

‘A vast o’ strange company gangs there,’ she said quaintly. ‘They mak’ a ter’ble stour in t’ place, do t’ Graham folk, but we’d want them badly if they’d to quit.’

She said this so naïvely that I thought at once of George and his curly brown hair and rustic ways, and wondered if he was as handsome in the eyes of my Norse maiden as she must be in his—as she was in mine. But the familiar way in which she spoke of the family rather amazed me, I must confess. I had not become accustomed then to the odd mixture of love and respect shown by the dales folk for their great families when of the soil. It is a different thing with strangers—‘foreigners,’ as they are generally called.

‘You know Mr. George Graham?’ I asked; ‘he is a great friend of mine.’

She laughed as if I had asked her something beyond measure funny.

‘Knew Master George? Yis;

Master George knows me an' father weel enough. Father hauds some o' t' Whelpo land, an' we'se farmed for t' Graham folk for fowre generations. Yis, I ken Master George gaily weel; an' t' young ladies too.'

'Are they nice young ladies?' I asked; 'as nice as Mr. George?'

'Miss Lucy's a fine girl,' said my Brunhilda, using the term in the meaning of good, amiable—not tall or handsome, as I should have done; 'an' Miss Maggie's a fine girl too, thof I reckon maist o' Miss Lucy; but I reckon nowt o' Miss Hetty at a'; she's gude for nowt anyhow.'

'Miss Hetty? I did not know there was a sister of that name; I thought there were only two.'

'She's t' cousin; she's nae sister; she's not a Graham, bluid or bane. She's a Southerner, an' black-faced,' said Brunhilda, with a scornful look and accent; 'but they think a vast o' Miss Hetty at Whelpo—a vast they do; an' she's not worth t' shoe-leather she stans upright in.'

'Then why do they think so much of her?' I asked.

Here was a drama ready made to one's hand, and I was anxious to understand at least the position of the characters.

'T'auld folks,' replied the girl: 'they want Master George to wed wi' her because she hes siller. But she's nae wife for him, siccan a feckless dawkin as she is! What can a mon used to t' dales do wi' a black-faced Southerner?'

This was said with an amount of ethnological contempt that made me smile. A black-faced Southerner might have been a woolly-headed African for the tone my young Norse maiden used; and I was dark too!

'You don't like Southerners, then?' I said with an idiotic laugh.

'They're weel enough for their ain,' Brunhilda answered philosophically, 'but they're nae guid in t' dales. Our ways ain't theirs, an'

theirs isn't ours, and they're nobbut puir bodies when a's said an' done; an' we divn't cotton wi' them—an' niver shall,' she added as a clencher.

'Not with Miss Hetty?'

'Nae! not wi' Miss Hetty; not if she was row'd i' gold!' said the girl energetically. 'An' if Master George weds wi' her, he'll not be t' mon we'se takken him for, father an' me.'

Saying which she turned away and ran down the mountain-side with a swiftness and almost savage freedom of step that distanced me in no time. I watched her for a long while, and saw her more than once put her hand up to her face as she ran; and I wondered if she was clearing her eyes of gathering tears, and if so, why?

I did not see much of the scenery after this, and trudged down to Whelpo rather wearily.

I found the Grahams' house full, with no room reserved for me. They were people who did things of this kind—invited you and went out on the day you were coming; or, as with me now, invited you and filled up your place. But they were good-hearted, and meant no offence in their carelessness; and when they told me, without the least shame or apology, that I was to go over to Isaac Musgrave's to sleep, I was fortunate enough to catch their tone, and accept things as I found them. I had become used by now to the rough accommodation of the Lake district, such as it was twenty years ago, before the time of railroads, big hotels, or frequent coaches; and perhaps the very novelty exaggerated my indifference to discomfort. It was a relief to me after the primness of home, and I was well content to play at rusticity and a backwoodsman's life in little by lodging at Isaac Musgrave's farm.

Meanwhile, I made acquaintance with George's family. I found his

father and mother quite country people, without pretensions of any kind, but shrewd too, and I could easily believe careful about money—perhaps even grasping—while hospitable in their own house, and unstinted in their rough country providing. His two sisters were rosy, unsophisticated girls, with clear eyes, blunt noses, wide lips, and flying curls of bright brown hair; girls who went out into the hay-field, and worked with a will, perhaps coming home in the cart on the top of the load; who were familiar with servants and young men—admitting me to a quite brotherly intimacy before I had been half an hour in the house; girls who were utterly careless in their get-up, but with a certain instinctive artistry about them that told them where to put the bunch of scarlet berries, and where to tie the knot of blue ribbon—careless to ungracefulness in their house, but good-natured, and of almost absurd innocence. They could not have been so unconventional else.

The cousin, Miss Hetty, was of a different stamp altogether. She was dark, small, and lightly framed, pretty in her foreign-looking way, but of a prettiness that was not beauty; her forehead was too flat, the head behind the ears too broad, the chin too pointed, the eyes too crafty in their glances, the step too soft. In fact she was of the cat class; and of all the types of womanhood going, I dread the cat type the most. But she was very graceful and lady-like, and I might have misjudged her. Perhaps in the state of exalted Bohemianism in which I was then, her town-bred ways, and the stereotyped good manners of an ordinary gentlewoman jarred upon me—more especially in the presence of round, rosy, laughing Lucy and Maggie, and after the finer vision of the Norse maiden on the mountains;

or perhaps she was what she seemed to be, untruthful and insincere. I do not know, I have never known, and never shall now.

She was evidently destined for George, who did not seem to quite enjoy his destiny; and in the confidential hour following on supper, the old lady told me in a whisper that she 'hoped things would be made smooth by Christmas-time; and that the young folks would have buckled to, and got it over before the New Year set in. But,' added Mrs. Graham with a fat little laugh, 'we daren't meddle with them much; we think it best for young folks to manage these things for themselves, and then they know their own minds.'

Which was exactly what George did not do; whatever might be said of Hetty.

When half-past nine came, I was bid to find my way to Musgrave's place—Town End as it was called—'just out by yonder,' said the gardener, pointing vaguely into the darkness. But it was full half a mile off, though the nearest human habitation by a great deal. It was higher up the fell where the pinch was sharpest; there was no road, the night was dark, the fell broken and rugged, set thick with gorse and juniper, and intersected with ravines worn down by water-courses; but George and his sisters made no more account of the difficulties than if they had been going over a bowling-green, and of course I followed their lead and made no more account than they. Even Hetty—for she had come too—even she, catching the humour of the moment, did not complain, though she needed incessant helping out of trouble; but George was too good-natured not to be attentive, and on the whole I think she liked the walk, and rather enjoyed the scramble than otherwise. It was certainly rather an original manner of pro-

ceeding to one's bedroom; but life at Whelpo was original throughout.

'This is Town End, Mr. Lumley,' said Lucy at last, as we came up to what looked like a range of ruined out-houses, while half-a-dozen colly-dogs, which had been barking like mad for the last ten minutes, closed round us, yelping at our heels. 'I wonder who is sitting up for us?' she added, peeping through the casement, utterly indifferent to the pack of collies, which made Hetty require an immense amount of George's protection. 'Why, it's Rachel!' she cried, opening the door. 'Here, Tachey,' she said gaily, 'we have brought your prisoner, Mr. Lumley.'

By the uncertain light of a stick fire on the hearth I saw a tall girl sitting on the settle knitting. She rose as we entered, and the flames, leaping up, showed a head of crisply-waved yellow hair, a lithe supple figure, strong and active, a pair of large white arms with the sleeves rolled up to the shoulder, and a broad white neck and bosom, where the short blue bedgown fell asunder. It was my Norse maiden of the mountains—my embodied verse of the *Nibelungen Lied*. It rather checked my breath when I saw her; but Rachel looked at me with that frank indifference which is so exasperating in a young girl, and said, in a matter-of-fact way, 'I've seed t' gentleman afore to-day; I seed him on t' fell-side.'

And—surely I was bewitched!—the racy Cumberland dialect seemed to me as beautiful as the delicate foreign intonation of a Polish countess.

'Yes, Rachel and I are old friends,' I said awkwardly.

Hetty's green-brown eyes glistened.

'I divn't ken about friends,' answered Rachel gravely; 'I divn't

ca' seeing a body ance being friends exact.'

'One for you, old fellow,' whispered George, in a peculiarly satisfied tone of voice; and I thought that both Hetty and Rachel overheard him, for the one frowned, and the other smiled.

'Not quite such friends as you and Abel, Tachey,' said Lucy laughing.

'Hoot awa' wi' your nonsense, Miss Lucy,' said Rachel; 'Abel an' me hes nowt on hands together, an' hesn't niver hed, for a' folk's senseless clashes.'

'But why don't you marry him?' insisted Lucy. 'He is very nice-looking, and everyone knows that he is in love with you.'

'I think nowt on him,' Rachel answered; 'an' I'll niver wed a mon as I thinks nowt on, Miss Lucy. If I cannot hev them as I've a mind for, I willn't tak them as I hev'n't a mind for.'

I thought that George looked a little conscious when she said this; but he did not speak. He only pulled at Moody's ears, and whistled while the old dog whined. Hetty's cat-like eyes got curiously glazed, and her small dark face seemed as if set into a mask.

'Then you expect to choose your husband, Rachel?' she said, with her cold voice. 'What an odd idea, and what a bold confession!'

'Better choose ane that gees weel wi' a body, than be takken by ane that jibs,' said Rachel quietly, conscious of having good sense it, not the rules of society on her side. Then she asked suddenly, 'Hew ye heerd t' tale they'se telling on young Mr. Rom'ly?'

'No; what is it?' asked George, a little hurriedly.

Mr. Romilly was the son of a neighbouring squire, given to drink and low company, as is unhappily not very uncommon with even the gentry of the North country when

they live in lonely places and have only the peasantry for their companions.

Rachel cast down her eyes; and even by the dim fire-light I saw that she blushed.

'He'se gone an' got wedded wi' Bella Lancaster,' she said; and she spoke as if she had launched a bombshell half boldly or half in terror.

'My goodness! What a dreadful thing!' said Maggie, speaking for the first time.

'Dreadful!' fired up George. 'Why dreadful, Maggie? Bella is a good girl, and if he loves her—'

'Loves her! — a carpenter's daughter!' said Hetty, with intense disdain.

'A carpenter's daughter, if a good girl, is better than a lord's if a bad one,' said George stoutly.

'Not for a gentleman,' said Maggie with the immorality of conventionalism.

George gave Moody a kick, and said 'Stuff!' viciously.

'No, cousin George, not stuff at all,' argued Hetty. 'We cannot change the laws of society for our pleasure, and it is of no use to go against them.'

'It is quite of use when they are wrong and immoral,' said George, in a flame.

'I do not see any particular morality in a gentleman's marrying a carpenter's daughter,' Hetty answered very smoothly. 'But if you like that kind of thing, of course it is another matter. Perhaps you are Mr. Romilly's rival in the affections of the fair belle?' sarcastically.

'Not quite,' said George, who hated sarcasm.

He looked at Rachel as he spoke; and I caught her look in return at him, and understood something, if not all. Fortunately for them Hetty's eyes were off guard at the

moment. She would not have liked what she would have seen else.

'Well, we must be going now,' said Lucy gaily. 'I declare it is quite late — nearly ten o'clock! Where's Isaac Tachey—in bed?'

'Yes, he's gittin' a lang darrack to-morrow, and must start early, sae he bad me sit oop for t' gentleman in 's place.'

'Are you not afraid?' said Hetty in her most unsympathetic voice.

'Why s'uld I be skeered?' returned Rachel, opening her eyes; 'there's nowt to mell on me here.'

Hetty laughed — a short dry laugh; and then Lucy, perfectly unconscious all this time of any hitch anywhere, said, 'Good-night, Tachey,' as if she had been speaking to a sister, while Maggie added, 'And try to like poor Abel, if you can, Rachel. It is such a long time since there was a wedding in the place; and it would be so nice to have one.'

'It'll be langer yit afore there's mine wi' Abel Armstrong,' answered Rachel.

'Has Mr. Romilly a brother that you are waiting for?' asked Hetty.

'Nay, Miss Hetty!' flashed out Rachel, 'I'se not ane o' t' mak as waits for them as willn't come o' theirsels.'

'That seems to be the fashion of the place,' said Hetty, continuing her own thought, and with a grand ignoring of Rachel's reply.

'What?' asked George; 'that Fred Romilly should have a brother, or that girls wait for men who will not have them?'

'Cousin George, you are a wretch!' said Hetty; and dashed from the cottage into the darkness, leaving Rachel and me alone.

I shall never forget that summer. From first to last it was unique. The boatings and crag-climbings and long mountain excursions with my friend George and those pretty



girls of his, were in themselves new life to a man like myself, suffocated by conventionalities, and weary of a town life; and though Rachel Musgrave was of course nothing to me but a study—a picture, as I said before, an embodied poem—yet she was beautiful, and I was young. And had not a gentleman of a kind, though a sorry one, married Mary, the Beauty of Buttermere, not so very long ago? and was it impossible to repeat at Ennerdale the pattern set at Buttermere? If it had not been for George! But I was mad. On looking back I can see how mad I must have been.

There was another person interested in the little drama going on at Ennerdale. This was Abel Armstrong, the blacksmith's son; a tall powerful fellow, known to be a poacher, and who would have been a smuggler had smuggling been in the list of Lake-country lawlessness. Indeed, he was suspected of lending a hand every now and then to the St. Bees custom-house pirates, and to have been concerned in the illegal runs of more than one bold Will Watch of the period. But nothing had ever been brought home to him, and his reputation was only hazy—his misdeeds never having been actually defined. He was a handsome-looking fellow of the daredevil kind—the strong man *par excellence* of the district; as black as a black Highlander, clever, shrewd, but rude and uncultivated—pleasanter, I should say, as a friend than as a foe. He was a good deal about Town End, the Musgraves' farm; if that can be called a farm which was just a bit snatched from the fell-side waste and forced into a poor half-starved state of cultivation; and he pleaded hard for Rachel 'to keep company' with him. But the girl was always steady to her refusal, and when spoken to about him gave the same answer

invariably—'I want nowt wi' him; an' I'll not grant leaves to them as I wants nowt wi'.'

He used to look black enough at the girl when she refused him, and black enough at George too when they met; but nothing was said on either side, and things seemed to be at a standstill for the immediate present.

There was to be an otter-hunt at Ennerdale. Those who know the Lake-district know what an excitement this sport is. The baying of the dogs echoed back by the mountains; the powerful, sinewy, and broad-shouldered men in their fustian and heavy clogs, looking of almost another race to the rest of Englishmen; the magnificent scenery in which the gathering takes place; and the feeling of home and personal pride and property in the fells and mountains which none but a mountaineer feels; the essential manliness of the sport—all make it one of the most fascinating of its kind, and one of the most locally characteristic. The meet to-day assembled near Whelpo; where a famous otter-river ran past the Intake at the foot of the garden; and the whole neighbourhood had gathered there. Girls and women, as well as boys and men, swelled the crowd; the Graham girls and Miss Hetty were there; so was Rachel, who had come down with butter and eggs, the house supplies at Whelpo being something prodigious in these times; Abel Armstrong was there; and old Isaac; and all the Whelpo guests, who looked like legion; and George Graham at the head of them, near to Rachel. I was rather surprised to see him standing with her so familiarly in such a public manner; but I did not know then what had happened the night before, and that he and my Norse maiden were engaged. No one knew it; only Abel and Hetty suspected something of the truth,

and for reasons privately known to each.

Just before we started, I asked my friend Lucy what was amiss with cousin Hetty; but dear Lucy, in her browsing, kid-like innocence, never knew anything and never saw anything. So long as she had plenty of liberty and fresh air, she was content, and let others hunt for secrets which she cared neither to track nor find.

'I don't know,' she sang out in her clear carrying voice; 'Hetty's often cross with George. George does not like her well enough; I think that must be it. She is jealous of him with poor little Rachel' (Rachel was a head and shoulders taller than Lucy). 'Such nonsense, you know!'

Abel was behind her as she spoke, and he must have heard every word uttered by her shrill clear voice. I had spoken in a whisper, and hoped that she would have taken the hint, and answered in the same tone; but she did not. Abel said nothing. He was busy fixing his tackle, and appeared absorbed in his task. Just then Hetty, too, came up to where we were standing; and a minute after, George.

'Shall we have a good day, Abel?' asked George lightly.

'I divn't ken,' answered Abel shortly.

'You used to know all about the weather and otters,' said George.

'I ken some signs, Master George, better nor t' sky!' Abel replied in a strange rude tone.

George looked at him in some surprise. The man's voice and ways were so insolent, I did not wonder at the surprise.

'Has the black ox trod on your foot, Abel?' he said in amaze.

'I ken nowt aboot black oxen, Master George, but I div ken summat o' white devils,' he replied fiercely, turning away while still looking at George—'shouldering'

him, in fact, as is such a common attitude and fashion with the dalesman.

I saw George flush and bite his lip; but he was a good-tempered fellow, like most of the broad-backed light-haired tribe; and perhaps he felt that as he had the best place he could afford to be generous. Old Isaac now joined our little group. He was grave, and looked disturbed.

'What's to do, Isaac?' said George. 'You look troubled;—what's amiss?'

'Ye ken t' beast ye'se after?' asked Isaac.

'What do you mean, man? Know him? Yes! He's been and taken a cart-load of as good salmon as was ever fished in his time. I ought to know him, I think.'

'He's a spotted ane,' said the old man, in a lowered voice. 'A spotted ane—white,' more emphatically.

'Well?'

'Weel, Mister George, an' there's niver a spotted ane takken an' kilt that divn't cost a mon's life wi' him. I've heerd that said sin' iver I was a lile lad, an' I've ken t' truth on it afore noo. There'll be mair nor t' beast bluid to-day an' ye finish him. 'Tak' my word on't, an' hev a care.'

I saw Abel's face grow absolutely white while Isaac spoke. He looked full at George, as if by a sudden impulse, and George looked full at him.

Then Abel went over to Rachel, and I heard him say in an earnest, strongly-moved voice, 'For t' last time, Rachel, will te hev me?'

'I'se given ye yer answer, Abel,' Rachel replied quietly, but not too coldly. 'I'se grieved ye thinks sae much on me; varra grieved I is; but I canna mak' ye hear reason.'

'Ye'se hard on me, Rachel,'

Abel answered with a groan. 'I'se followed ye iver sin' ye were a lile lass, an' niver thought o' nine ither lass; an' noo ye say me nay.'

'Wald ye hev me say thee yea, Abel, and not feel't?' asked Rachel.

'An' ye canna, lass?'

'I canna,' she answered.

'Then it's a' owre wi' me an' him,' said Abel in a low voice. 'Ye divn't ken yer ain wark, Rachel; but mind what I says noo—ye'se nobbut theesel to thank when t' end comes—as it sall!'

'Abel! Abel!' called Rachel, as he turned away; but Abel did not answer, and he did not look back. Poising his otter-spear he mixed in with the rest, and, so far as I saw, never cast a look back to Rachel or his rival. I could not help pitying him, poor fellow. He was evidently badly hit, and I was not the man to wonder or condemn.

Soon after this we all mustered in order and set out on the hunt; and as we were moving off the ground, I saw Hetty speak a rapid word with Abel; while George, going up to Rachel, took her hand openly in the face of all, and held it while he bid her good-bye. Ennerdale knew then what was afoot—that young Mr. Graham was going to follow the example of his friend Fred Romilly, and marry a girl of the people; and that 'Armstrong Abel' was distanced in the race and given the go-by. But what was it that Hetty had said? What could a proud conventional girl have found to say to a poaching blacksmith in private? It troubled me a great deal at first; but I was young, and not easily given to superstition, and the hunt soon absorbed my whole faculties, and shut out all save its own excitement.

The chase led us into the corner of the larch wood through which the river ran; into one of those

boldly broken bits of rock and ravine, tree-shadowed and fern-clothed, which are never so beautiful anywhere as in the Lake-district, where they seem to unite every loveliness that nature has to give.

It was rather dark, though, at this corner; the banks were steep and sharp, and there was a tremendous hubbub and confusion. I was standing on the rocks overhanging the stream, when Abel Armstrong came up to me. He had been drinking from his whisky-flask since we left Whelpo; and drink and excitement together had made him rather formidable to look at. He was his worst self at this moment; one might have looked at him till one's fancy had made him scarcely human. His dark eyes glowed as if on fire, and his swarthy cheeks were flushed and burning, his wild black locks fell in matted confusion over his face; and dark and bold as he was, he looked like the impersonation of all the evil passions of humanity combined—like Lucifer or Cain in fustian.

'This 'ud be a bonny place for twa men as hates ane anither to try their stren'th in,' he said, in an insolent voice, as he came up to me suddenly.

'Do you think so?' I answered coldly.

To admire Rachel Musgrave was one thing; to admit Abel's familiarity another.

'Yes, I du: an' what's mair, I'd like to see t' fight; an' what's mair nor that, I'd like to hev a hand in 't mysel'!' He said this even more offensively.

'Should you?' I answered as coldly as before; 'I cannot say that I should.'

'You would not like what, Lumley?' asked George Graham, coming up.

He, too, was much heated, for otter-hunting is hard work; and he

was taking a moment's rest, while the men below were beating for the game.

'Fighting,' I said.

'Who wants a fight?' he asked good-humouredly.

'I do, Master George,' said Abel, with an oath. 'Coom, Master George, coom, lad,' he added very insolently, and squaring out, 'let you an' me see which is t' best mon o' t' two.' And he struck Graham heavily on the breast.

George, if good-humoured, was passionate, and returned the blow with interest; when suddenly a shout was heard from below—men and boys ran and swayed and flung sticks and stones and otter-spears at random—the baying dogs bayed deeper, and closed nearer round—the panting muzzle of a hunted beast showed above the water, and the supreme moment was at hand. The chase stopped the fight.

'I'll not forget you, Abel,' cried George, as he ran down the bank, to be in at the death.

'Nor I thee, Master George,' shouted Abel. 'Town-End Isaac said true when he said "there'll be mair nor beast bluid to-day, an' we tak' him." An' it sall be either thine or mine.'

After this I saw nothing. The concourse was large, the confusion great. I was young in those days, and excitable, easily carried off my head, and madly fond of manly sports, perhaps because I had so little of them. An otter-hunt was not a thing to neglect, even to watch the issue of a friend's quarrel; so I too scrambled down the bank, and shouted and strove with the rest, to see at last a white spotted beast hauled out of the water, bleeding and dead. I distinctly remember George Graham at this moment. He was one of the foremost of the hunters, standing up to his middle in the pool, and shouting to the others what to do. And I

could not help thinking what a magnificently-built young fellow he looked, what a thorough-going representation of the rough north-country life, and how strong and full of force. It was the last time I saw him alive.

Late in the evening, when all the Whelpo party had been assembled for some time, inquiries began to be made for George; where was he? who had seen him? wherever could the lad be at this time of night?

'I doubt,' said Mrs. Graham, in a troubled voice, 'I much doubt our George is making up with Rachel Musgrave. It will be a sore thing to me, and he the only son; but I doubt it.' She turned to Hetty, her kind motherly face full of pain.

Hetty's eyes looked up for a moment, then looked down again. 'I thought everyone knew that,' she said, quite quietly, 'George is engaged to Rachel; he told me so this morning.'

'Never!' cried the mother. The father's words were stronger.

'O, yes, he is!' said Hetty; 'don't you know that he is, Lucy?'

'I?' said Lucy, opening her eyes. 'My goodness, no! I never dreamt of such a thing!'

'Then you are blind,' Hetty answered composedly.

'Lucy, you must be daft not to have seen it,' cried her mother. 'You, for ever with your poor brother as you are—you must be a downright dope; and I always said you were.'

'Why, mamma, there was nothing to see,' said Lucy.

'Nothing to see, bairn? Does a man engage himself to a girl out of hand with nothing to see before!' exclaimed her father. 'Nothing to see? I warrant there was plenty to see, and to spare. But he'll never darken my doors

as Rachel's husband, and if he takes her he leaves us.'

'I think you are quite right, for the sake of the girls,' said Hetty in a low voice; but her face was radiant with a cruel flush of triumph.

'For our sakes!' cried Lucy and Maggie together; then, weeping, Lucy added, 'I would rather have George among us, were it ever so, than lose him for anything whatever.'

'Then you may go with him and his huzzy!' exclaimed the father. 'If you care more for your brother than for your father and mother, Lucy, go—and my curse along with you both!'

'O, father, father! do not curse him,' cried poor Lucy, clinging to him. 'Take back your words, papa; do not curse him!'

'I do—I will!' said the old man fiercely. 'He has thwarted my nearest wish; and I do curse him for it!'

'Father! mother dear! you'll live to rue your words!' cried Lucy, wringing her hands. 'O, take them back while you can!—George, that you have loved so well!'

'Yes, and it's because of that,' said Mr. Graham. 'Loved him! yes, I did love him—never father better; but I've cast him off now, and if he weds with Rachel, he'll be no son of mine after.'

At this moment the door opened suddenly, and Rachel Musgrave came into the room. Her fair face was white and stiffened, her yellow hair pushed far back from her forehead, her lips were squared and open, almost like the tragic mask of olden times.

'Where's Master George?' she said. 'Has any of you seed him? Where is he?'

The awful terror in her face stopped the storm that would have met her.

'No, we have not seen him,' said the mother, rising, and speaking in

a hoarse voice full of fear. 'Why do you ask, Rachel? Child! what is amiss?'

There was no word now of displeasure for the untimely love which had just created so much anger. Had Rachel brought good news of George, she might have taken him for her own, with their full consent and blessing.

'I've seed his fetch,' said Rachel, the same look of horror still stiffening her noble face. 'He's ligging down in t'otter pool yonder; he tellt me sae hisself; and Armstrong Abel put him there.'

I heard his father say to himself, 'And I cursed him!' as he covered his face with his hands.

'He's there again!' cried Rachel wildly, pointing to the open window. 'George, my lad! divn't look sae sadly at me. There's bluid on yer bonny brow, my lad; let me tak' it off and keep ye.'

She made one long step towards the window, but fell before she reached it; and I swear that I saw, standing there in the moonlight, the form of my friend George Graham, dressed as I had seen him last, with blood oozing from a large wound on his forehead. Then the shape passed away, and only the mist-wreaths lay upon the hill-sides.

Two hours after this we were standing by the pool where the otter had been killed. The red flare of the torches flashed upon the water like bands of blood, laced here and there with faint lines of silver, where the moonlight stole quivering through the branches; the frightened birds flew screaming overhead; the hill-fox barked in the near distance; George's old retriever, Moody, whined and ran about the banks uneasily; and then, O God! the light fell upon the pale face of a dead man, lying in the shallows among the rocks, with a broad stain of blood on his

forehead, where his skull had been battered in.

Nothing more was ever known, though much of course was suspected. Abel Armstrong disappeared from the place, and no one heard of him again. Once indeed, years after, a cousin of his said he had seen him down at Whitehaven, on board a suspicious-looking foreign vessel ; but that might have been, or not. He never came back to Ennerdale again to face the reports that went about concerning him and George Graham ; for the whole vale believed that he had murdered the poor fellow—the whole vale having known of the rivalry. Rachel did not die. People do not die of heartbreak—they only stiffen, and grow cold and old before their time. As Rachel did. When I saw her again, ten years after, she was like a woman of forty, with a fixed sorrow on her face that saddened one's

very heart to see ; ennobled, dignified, still beautiful, but like a person whose blood has been once checked, so that it could never flow freely again. She was the palest thing to live, as Mrs. Graham said, that could be found ; but she bore her sorrow with a stately dignity that won her the respect of all about. Ah ! how gladly would the old people have given her their son, could her love have brought him back to life ! By the last I heard of Hetty she was married, and well married too ; but her health was shattered, and the doctors said she had nervous delusions—of a painful nature. There was some nameless disease of the optic nerve, they said—some pressure on the brain somehow ; for she saw ghastly sights at times, and wore away her life in much obscure suffering. So at least my friend Lucy told me, when I called on her the day before she went to India with her husband.

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‘My turn next?’ said the man sitting by the last speaker ; a tall thin man, with high cheek-bones, and bright blue eyes, and a long red beard. ‘Well, I will tell you a story that was told to me last autumn, over a tumbler of toddy, at the Orange Tree, in Granitown—a story of

### *HOW A MAN WAS DRESSED TO DEATH.*

GRANITOWN is, perhaps, the coldest, hardest, most uninviting town in the whole of her Majesty's dominions ; but on my way north in the shooting season I always halt at Granitown ; for, to me, the place is full of old and pleasant memories—pleasant, perhaps, because they are memories and not present realities.

Let me begin by telling you why I love Granitown, and why I incline towards the Orange Tree.

I went to the University at Granitown. You, who went to the University at Oxford or Cambridge,

can have no idea what it is *fideliter didicisse artes* at Granitown. I arrived, per mail-coach, from a region farther north, at the stony academic grove when I was just thirteen. At that age I donned the academic gown. At Granitown, the academic gown is a cloak of red serge, with a broad velvet collar of the same fiery hue. I remember well what I did when I burst away from the maternal apron-strings to assume the *rubra toga academica*. On reaching the market-town whence the coach started, I bought half-a-dozen Manilla

cheroots, and smoked three of them during the journey without being sick. Next day I passed a pretty severe examination in Latin and Greek. Master of Cæsar's Commentaries and Anacreon's Odes, and able to smoke three Manilla cheroots without even changing colour! Surely I was a man!

I daresay you will laugh at the simple ways of our academic life in Granitown. There was no residence within college bounds. Each student searched out a lodging for himself in the town, and lived and studied there without being subject to any proctorial surveillance. Every morning at nine we made our way through the streets in our red gowns, with our books in a strap, to the college. At one we went home to dinner, and returned to the class-room at three for a Greek lecture. The youths of Sparta were not devoted to a more rigid life. The fair mother, who nourished us in what was there called the humanities, had a breast of stone. We did a great deal upon 'a little oatmeal.' Our days were spent in the class-rooms, our nights in getting up the tasks for the next day. We rarely saw any pleasure. There was a theatre in the town; but the professors, who were bound by a law of the University to be *viri pii* as well as *docti* (and, indeed, I think they were more *pii* than *docti*), set their faces against it, and we could not be seen at the play without running the risk of a reprimand and a lecture. But, truth to say, it was not often that we could afford to indulge our dramatic tastes. I cannot recall now in what our pleasure consisted, unless it was in smoking pipes. We lived hard and studied hard, and became masters of arts in four years. Some of us had written A.M. (we say *artium magister* in Granitown) after our names before we were eighteen. This, then, is why I love Grani-

town—because I outlived all its cold, hard miseries. I regard them now with the sense of triumph which swells the bosom of the adventurer who, having reached the highest summit of the Alps, looks down with placid satisfaction on the dangers he has passed and the difficulties he has overcome. I love Granitown in the spirit of the man who forgives.

And the Orange Tree—why do I incline towards that hostelry? Do you know that it is a dear ambition of every Scottish youth to be admitted to the toddy-table—to have, after dinner, a toddy-tumbler, with ladle, &c. placed for him among the grown-up folks? It is not the tail-coat, but the toddy-tumbler that marks the advent of manhood. Well, the Orange Tree was a famous toddy-house, frequented by all the wits and (newspaper) *literati* of Granitown. When we were 'bejants'—that is to say, yellow-nibbed unfledged academic birds in our first and second sessions—we did not dare to approach the Orange Tree. But we longed for the time to come when we might venture to lay claim to the honours of a tumbler among the brilliant grown-up company there. And that time came in the third year, when our whiskers were beginning to sprout. I attained to the dignity of a tumbler at the Orange Tree. Remembering this, on my first visit to Granitown after leaving its University, I put up at that hostelry.

Looking from my bedroom-window, I saw the white towers of my *alma mater*. In the room below-stairs I had partaken of many a frugal but jolly supper. In a neighbouring street I had lodged; at a window opposite I had seen my first love. Here were my first pavements, my first shops; here my first theatre. Sitting alone, quietly smoking a cigar, the old times and



the old people and the old doings came rushing back through twenty years in an avalanche of memory, sweeping away my present sense. Since I last sat here, the world had been turned upside down. Empires had risen and fallen; great persons, without whom we thought the world could not go on, had passed away, to be succeeded by other great persons, who had not been heard of then. Revolution had rolled upon revolution, until the old landmarks of political, social, moral, and religious life had almost wholly disappeared from view. All these great things had given way to the push of time; but the little things by which I was surrounded remained the same. The world had been shaken to its foundations; but the white stones of Granitown were unmoved. Crowns had changed heads, and head-gear of all kinds had undergone many and strange mutations; but Samuel Martin still manufactured and sold hats at the same shop in Union-street. Perhaps it is foolish to moralise in this way, but I can't help it. I see over against me a picture of pear-headed Louis Philippe. It hung in that very place five-and-twenty years ago. It is hanging there now, and probably has never been moved. Louis Philippe was alive then and a king. But what has happened to Louis Philippe while this picture has been serenely hanging undisturbed on its nail? Is it foolish to moralise about a little nail being a more tenacious thing than a great life—a hoop of wire more enduring than a royal crown? If so, I must confess myself a fool. There is an attenuated brass-knocker upon the door of my old lodging. I never see it without falling into a reverie about what has passed in the world since that old knocker was new.

I was in a reverie of this kind at the Orange Tree when the waiter

entered, and said a gentleman wished to see me.

'Did he give his name?'

'No.'

'Are you sure he asked for me?'

'Yes.'

'Well, show him in.'

There entered a tall fair man of middle age, and the smile of recognition upon his face seemed to imply that he knew me. I did not know him.

'Have you forgotten,' he said, 'John Black—Johnny?'

When he said 'Johnny,' I saw the tall figure before me dwindle down to the stature of a boy, the flowing light beard vanished, and revealed smooth pink cheeks, the frock-coat became an academic gown, the chimney-pot hat—one of Sammy Martin's, I'll be sworn—was transformed into a cap with a tassel. And here, in my memory's eye, stood my old college companion—best scholar of his class—Johnny Black. But I should not have known him. I had not forgotten him; but I had always thought of him as the little, boyish, smooth-faced bejant of auld lang syne.

'I should not have known you in the street, Mr.—'

'Johnny,' he put in.

'Johnny,' I repeated, having received permission to be familiar.

'Nor I you,' he replied. 'You have grown two feet at least; you have had your hair cut.'

He laughed as he said this. I laughed too, for I suddenly called to mind that in my bejant days I had a mania for long hair. I remembered everybody's peculiarity but my own.

'Yes, I have had it cut, Johnny, and I have had it blanched and brushed bare, as you will perceive, on the top by Time's machinery.'

And this set us talking about the old class, what careers in life

our old college companions had adopted, and how it had fared with them in the world. I had lost sight of them all ; but Johnny having remained at head-quarters, as it were, knew something about most of them. When we had dined and mixed a tumbler, we began a review of the troops.

'First about yourself, Johnny. At college, you remember, you were a great classic. What are you? A professor?'

'No.'

'A minister?'

'No.'

'A schoolmaster?'

'No.'

'What then?'

'A wood merchant.'

'A good thing?'

'A *very* good thing.'

'Have you found Virgil of much use to you?'

'Professionally, no ; but a solace after a long day among the Norwegian deals.'

'Greek roots?'

'Have not served me much in judging of mahogany trunks.'

'But Euclid has been of use to you in measuring them?'

'Less would have done.'

'A scholar and a timber merchant ; that's odd.'

'Odder things have happened in other cases. You remember that merry fellow Jamieson, who was always laughing and playing mad pranks? He grew serious, terribly serious, became a missionary, went out to some savage place in the South Seas, and was eaten by the natives.'

And so we went over them, one by one. It was sad to hear how many of them had gone to the bad through toddy ; curious to hear how many rackets boys had become ministers of the Church ; and according to Johnny's account all those who were ministers had enormously large families of chil-

dren. The mention of each name called up in my mind's eye a mere boy ; and now all those boys had boys, and girls too, of their own.

At last we came to mention Alec Stronach.

'What became of him?' I asked.

'Alec,' said Johnny, 'was dressed to death.'

'Dressed to death!—how? what?'

'Listen,' said Johnny ; 'I will tell you the story.'

Alec, as you may remember, was an idle, careless, ne'er-do-well young fellow. He was neglectful of his studies, though no one in the class could less afford to waste his opportunities, for Alec was poor. Alec had but one good quality to recommend him—he was handsome. I daresay you do not forget how we all envied him his good looks and elegant figure. We had better clothes than Alec—that is to say, newer, richer, and more expensive clothes ; but Alec in his second-hand dodged-up things looked a better-dressed lad than any of us. There was something about the cut of his seedy coats and trousers, or their set, some touch of style in his hat or boots, that none of us could ever reach. I had a brand-new guinea beaver that I would have exchanged any moment for Alec's worn, well-brushed French hat. It was a flat-brimmed hat. Flat brims were the fashion at the time, and I daresay you, as well as myself, have often looked in at Sammy Martin's window, and coveted a flat-brimmed, short-napped hat. They were only fourteen-and-six, and I thought it was nothing but the perversity inherent in a parent that made my father insist upon my wearing a clumsy tile, which, when the wind blew, assumed the appearance and proportions of a lady's muff. Alec's was a cast-off hat, I daresay, but it looked well on Alec ; everything looked well on him. You remem-

ber how smart and stylish his gown looked, and how clumsy ours both looked and felt; and yet they came from the same shop. It was Alec's way of wearing it.

During his two last sessions Alec devoted himself to billiards. He was awfully ignorant of both Greek and Latin; but he was a first-rate mathematician—a much better mathematician than any of us, except, perhaps, James Ferguson; and we ascribed his proficiency, not to study—for Alec never did study—but to his nightly practice at the billiard-table. It was an article of faith, which we held with some degree of awe, that Alec Stronach acquired a knowledge of angles and tangents by practising on the green cloth. Old Flukey, the mathematical professor, did not like Alec, though he might have claimed him as a high testimony to his own powers as a teacher. He did not like Alec, because he knew that the lad was a billiard-player. Our professors were nearly all reverends, and liked *good* boys better than *clever* boys. There were only two competitors at last for the mathematical prize of 60*l.*—Alec, and James Ferguson. James won it, as we all believed, not because he was the better mathematician, but because he was the better boy. His morals turned the scale; and yet I don't know that Alec did anything very wrong except play billiards. Alec failed to get his degree; but his mathematics dragged him through, and at the end of the four years he commenced the study of medicine.

He was getting very seedy about this time. Day and night, day and night—the story is beginning now—Alec, who had grown a man, longed for good clothes. In the evening he haunted that part of Union-street where Forbes, the tailor's shop, is situated. He never strolled far beyond it either way,

and every time he passed he stopped and looked wistfully at the coats, waistcoats, and trousers in the window. In like manner would he gaze enviously at Sammy Martin's hats and John Mann's boots.

Alec had fallen in love with a beautiful young lady, who evidently admired his handsome figure and good looks. She was constantly stealing glances at him, and Alec felt that he only wanted good clothes to complete the conquest. Twenty times a day Alec sighed, 'O, that I had some good clothes!'

It was a presumptuous thing in Alec to aspire to the hand of Miss Macdonald. Her father was a rich ship-owner. She was the belle of the town; tall, a handsome figure, and always the first to adopt the new fashions. Like Alec, she looked wonderfully well in her clothes. You must remember her surely; used generally to be seen in Union-street about one o'clock, when the students went home to dinner. All the red gowns were in love with her. I was, I know, though I was only fourteen and she was twenty. Lord! the nights I have tossed about thinking of that fine woman, and comparing her to Dido, and wishing I were *Æneas*. *Stat dea*—you remember how Blackie used to say it, with his finger in the air like a mark of admiration. Alec to fall in love with such a goddess! and *he* a poor shopkeeper's son, living in a garret! You may remember that Alec's residence was a mystery. No one knew where he lived but myself. I accidentally penetrated the mystery; saw him turning into the dark court one day when an errant humour took me into the Watergate. He was aware that I saw him; and when he was ill once he asked me to come and see him, but begged of me not to tell the other fellows where he lived. It was up four pair of stairs. Such a bare squalid

room, with nothing in it but a little truckle-bed, a washing-stand, a scrap of carpet as big as your hand, and a single chair! Well, to my story.

One night, when Alec was sitting in his humble lodgings, meditating upon his hard fate in not having new fashionably-cut coats, waistcoats, and trousers, the door opened and the devil stood before him.

'The devil!' I exclaimed. 'Then this is romance.'

'No,' said Johnny, 'it is reality. Listen: the devil did not come *in propria*, or if you will, *impropria*, *persona*, but in the insinuating form of Forbes the tailor. There was no brimstone, nor anything of that sort—only, perhaps, a slight flavour of hot goose.'

Before Alec had time to say 'What would you?' the devil—I mean Forbes the tailor—addressed him: 'I have watched you,' he said; 'I have seen you many times looking wistfully at the elegantly-cut garments in my window. I know the longing desire of your heart—it is for good clothes.'

Alec could not deny it.

'I come to grant your heart's desire,' said Forbes the devil—I mean the tailor.

'On what terms?' demanded Alec. 'Do you wish me to sell my soul to you?'

'No,' said Forbes the tailor; 'your body.'

'Explain yourself,' said Alec.

Forbes the tailor proceeded to explain himself.

'You are tall and handsome; you have a good figure; a good chest for a vest, a good waist and hip for a coat, a good leg for a pair of trousers. The best-cut clothes are thrown away upon a bad figure; upon a good figure like yours they are a charm to the eyes of all beholders. You shall have from me a complete suit of every new fashion

as it comes up, free, gratis, for no thing.'

'And what am I to do in return for this favour?' inquired Alec.

'I merely require you,' said his visitor, 'to show yourself in the promenade as frequently as possible, and to tell all persons who may admire your clothes that your tailor is Forbes of Union-street.'

'You don't want me to stand at your shop-door like a dummy?' Alec inquired.

'Certainly not.'

'Nor to carry a placard on my breast inscribed "The newest style, 3*l.* 10*s.*"?'

'Nothing of the kind.'

'You merely wish me to wear your clothes, to set them off in the eyes of the public, and to tell everybody who's my tailor?'

'Exactly.'

'I agree to that,' said Alec.

'Then sign,' said the tailor.

'With my blood?' Alec inquired.

'No, ink will do.'

Alec signed the bond, and the devil—I mean the tailor—after measuring him for a suit of clothes, vanished amid a cloud of smoke—from his cigar.

Three days afterwards, Forbes the tailor called upon Alec, and brought with him the new suit.

'Put them on,' he said.

Alec hastened to comply. Forbes turned him about and surveyed him at all points. The clothes fitted him to perfection. Forbes was satisfied with his handiwork. Alec felt himself both morally and physically a better man. No rents nor threadbare patches disturbed his mind. He could walk erect now like a man, with his face towards the stars.

Next day he took a walk in the promenade. He was the cynosure of all eyes, the admired of all beholders. He heard them whispering: 'Look at Alec! what a swell he is!'

The men were dying with envy, the women languishing with secret admiration. Forbes stood at his shop-door watching him as he walked up and down. By and by when Alec passed he whispered to him :

'Has anybody asked you who's your tailor yet?'

'Not yet,' said Alec.

'Then continue your walk,' said Forbes.

Alec continued his walk, but nobody asked him the (to Forbes) momentous question.

'Odd,' said Forbes ; 'I expect we have stunned them altogether !'

'On the contrary,' said Alec, with some hesitation in his manner, 'I don't think we have stunned them quite enough.'

'What do you mean?' demanded Forbes the tailor with warmth. 'Do you mean to say that my cut—'

'No,' Alec replied apologetically, 'I make no reflections upon your cut, but—'

'But what?' asked the tailor sharply.

'The boots,' said Alec, glancing significantly at his high-lows.

The tailor saw the state of the case in an instant.

'Um, ah!' he replied thoughtfully. '*They* do spoil the effect. No amount of art could cover the primitive rudeness of those boots. They are decidedly a discord. We must have harmony.'

Alec noticed that he said 'we.'

'I tell you what,' said Forbes the tailor; and he hesitated.

'What?' inquired Alec.

'You must have a pair of new boots, in the latest fashion, neat, natty, with square toes.'

'How?' inquired Alec.

'Go to Mr. Mann, get a pair of thin calf Wellingtons, and tell him to put them down to me.'

'And the hat?' suggested Alec.

'Well, your hat *is* shabby,' said Forbes. 'You must have a new

one. Go to Sammy Martin, and get the best and the glossiest flat-brim in the shop. Tell him to put a broad band on it; it looks nobby. And stay; you want gloves to make the thing complete. Come into the shop, and I'll fit you with a pair of Frenchstraw-coloured kids. They're four shillings a pair, and mind you take care of them.'

When Alec was fully rigged out, he visited his favourite billiard-room, and was hailed with shouts of admiration.

'Who's your tailor, Alec?' was asked by everybody, in chorus.

'Forbes of Union-street,' said Alec carelessly.

'Tick?' was the inquiry.

'No.'

'Then what are you going to stand?'

The inference was natural enough. Alec had come out a swell, and he had paid for his clothes. He must have had a legacy left him; he must have money in his pocket.

'What are you going to stand, Alec, all round?'

At this question Alec felt the awkwardness of his position. He was sensible that he had not all necessary things in a concatenation. He had fine clothes, but no money (to speak of) in the pockets of them. He had overlooked that in the bond. He should have bargained for a sovereign in every pocket, and a roll of one-pound notes in the lining of his hat.

He was obliged quietly to borrow five shillings to treat his friends. There was some consolation in the fact that his fine clothes made it comparatively easy to borrow that crown-piece.

Alec was not a little vexed by Forbes the tailor coming in that night to gaze at him and admire his own clothes.

When it came to Alec's turn to play, he took off his coat and threw it carelessly upon the seat. Forbes

the tailor immediately rushed forward, and taking the garment up tenderly hung it upon a peg and smoothed out the wrinkles.

When Alec half sat upon the table to make an awkward stroke, and his opponent cried out, 'Not fair!' Forbes the tailor said: 'O no, certainly not fair;' and going up to Alec whispered in his ear: 'You'll spoil the shape of *my* trousers.'

He remonstrated with Alec for divesting himself of his waistcoat—he called it *vest*—which he flattered himself was the perfection of cut.

'You're positively robbing me,' muttered Forbes the tailor.

Alec, who missed a pocket at that moment, hissed through his teeth, 'Go to the devil!' but luckily Forbes the tailor did not hear him. What would have been the consequence if Forbes the tailor *had* heard him, Heaven only knows.

Of course Alec made a great sensation in the medical class.

The professor looked at him; his fellow-students looked at him and envied him. Anatomy was studied that day chiefly in the figure of Alec Stronach. He was asked a hundred times who his tailor was, and he answered faithfully, according to the bond: 'Forbes of Union-street.'

The business of Forbes of Union-street began to improve, and Forbes traced the fact directly to Alec. This only urged him to further efforts. He was constantly sending for Alec to go down and try on a new coat, a new vest, or a new pair of trousers. In business or in pleasure, in sickness and in sorrow, Alec had no rest. He had to leave his dinner, his study, his billiards, to be measured and fitted by Forbes of Union-street. Forbes called upon him at all hours, to consult about a new cut; he required him to attend *fêtes*, and bazaars, and public balls. The

thing was getting irksome, particularly as Alec was making progress in his suit in love. The lady lost her heart completely when Alec became a swell. The fine clothes mollified the heart of her father; his visits were encouraged; and Alec, lover-like, took delight in walking with his lady-love in secluded places. But this did not suit Forbes the tailor. He remonstrated with Alec for withdrawing himself from the public eye. He did not furnish him with clothes to waste their beauty in deserted lanes. Alec was between two stools—Forbes the tailor and his lady-love. If he defied Forbes the tailor, and returned to his threadbare clothes, he would lose the lady. When he became restive, Forbes bade him look at the bond. He there found, as part of the compact, that he was to return all clothes to Forbes when they were demanded. He was obliged to submit; but the yoke galled him dreadfully. They who thought Alec a happy man little knew his inward sufferings. He grew melancholy and irritable; his malady was garments on the brain.

There is a last straw which breaks the camel's back. There was a final paletot which overturned Alec's reason. He was walking one day in the fruit-market with the lady of his love. She would have five thousand pounds; and Alec was bringing matters to a point. At this critical moment Forbes the tailor tapped him on the shoulder, and said:

'I want to speak to you for a moment most particularly.'

'Excuse me,' said Alec, turning to the lady; 'a gentleman wishes to see me on business. I will return in three minutes. Shall I find you here?'

She said, 'Yes.'

Forbes the tailor took Alec by the arm.

'I want you,' he said, 'to come and try on a new paletot—white with black braid. I am sure it will be a great go.'

'Impossible,' said Alec; 'I am engaged with a lady—another time.'

'No, now,' said Forbes the tailor. 'I want it out before anybody else. I will not detain you a minute.'

Alec went with him to his shop, and tried on the paletot.

Forbes was delighted with the new triumph of his skill.

'Wear this,' he said; 'and I shall have another one made, and ticket it in the window—"The Cheese!"'

Alec returned to the market. His lady-love was gone. He looked at the clock, and found that Forbes the tailor had occupied him for half an hour. He had promised to return in three minutes. He called next day at the lady's house to apologise, but she declined to see him.

A week afterwards he learned that she had married a captain of militia. Alec tore his hair and

cursed Forbes the tailor. Reason lost its seat, and Alec was seized with a sudden loathing of clothes. He rushed from his lodgings, made his way to Union-street, tore off every article of clothing on his body, and threw the bundle into Forbes's shop. This done, with nothing on but his hat, he tore along the street like mad. In fact he was mad, literally stark staring mad. They had a difficulty in catching him, for it is not easy to lay hold of a man who has nothing on but his skin. When secured at last, he was taken to the police-station, where he was pronounced *non compos*, and removed to the lunatic asylum. He remained there for years, but never could be induced to wear clothes. He is dead now.'

Johnny finished his story so seriously and in so sad a tone that I could not forbear asking him if there was any foundation for what he had told me. His reply was: 'It is nearer the truth than anybody who ever hears it will believe.'

'And now, sir,' said the Solicitor, in his chairman-like voice, turning towards the portly middle-aged gentleman with the fur-coat, the bald head, the florid face, and the dark whiskers hinting a suspicion of dye, 'we come to you; and I *know*'—this with a certain chuckle—'if the likenesses of eminent characters in the photograph-shops do not mislead me, that in *your* hands we're safe.'

### THE MANAGER'S STORY.

'WELL,' said the gentleman addressed, 'if I must, I must—not that I am going to make any excuses; although "excuses" and "apologies" have often fallen to my lot in the way of business. Nor can I put forward that hackneyed pretence for any shortcomings, "unaccustomed as I am to public speaking;" since public speaking,

after a certain fashion, has been my habit to a considerable extent, especially in the earlier portion of my career. Nor can I offer the pretext, that "Story, God bless you, I have none to tell, sir;" for my life has been passed among some very exciting scenes, in more senses than one. And yet I feel a considerable reluctance to carry out my share in



the production of the expected drama—I mean the promised narrative. Not that I feel ashamed of relating any of the many adventures in which I have taken part during a chequered existence. No, no; whatever prejudice may choose to arrogate to itself, I am not ashamed of past or present, or of my glorious calling. But my mind is just now so full of some situations—incidents I mean—suggested to me by the admirable plot worked out by this dear good French lady here,—and he kissed his hand towards her—‘with which I was in some degree personally connected, and of which the scene was recently laid in Paris, that nothing else will come into my head or out of my mouth; and as painful recollections are evoked by them—well! no matter—we had better ring up the curtain at once.’

By the bye, although prologues are out of date nowadays, I fear it is necessary that I should trouble you with one to my own little drama, by way of preliminary explanation to what is about to follow. I am now before my audience. I make my bow. Have you not already divined—in fact, I see by the smiling of some of you that such is the case—that I am in the theatrical line of business? My face is not an unknown one; I may say, with pride, not an unpopular one. Although now the manager of a London theatre—and I hope I may be allowed to say a thriving one—I have been long on the boards as an actor; and it is not without considerable self-satisfaction that I make a boast, and not a shame, of the fact that I have risen from the lowest ranks of the profession, and have even made my first juvenile appearance with the traditional ‘banner’ in my hands. That is little, however, to our present purpose. It was in my

managerial capacity that the little drama I am about to recite was acted in real life before me.

Well, I went to Paris, as a manager, to see whether I could pick up a new attraction to stimulate the flagging excitement of my public. You need not smile with that gentle air of sarcasm. It was not to look after the last new Parisian sensation for adaptation to the English boards. If I must let you into the secrets of the profession, it was to engage some clever *danseuse* to undertake a striking pantomime-part of a dumb girl in a drama which I was anxious to produce. In other words, it was a young pantomimic actress, rather than a mere ballet-dancer, of whom I stood in need—a prize not easy to be obtained; as the combination of all the qualities I desired was a rare one. The answer to my inquiries amongst professional men of judgment and professional agents in Paris was, to my great surprise, invariably the same. I must see ‘La Pepita.’ She was dancing at one of the great Boulevard theatres, at which sensational melodrama was the staple commodity, but which occasionally varied its performances by any striking attraction likely to entice a horror-satiated public. La Pepita was the rage of the season, I was told. Had I found my coveted treasure? Before taking any steps in my professional capacity, I resolved to judge for myself; and, in order that my purpose might remain unknown, I paid my money like one of the ordinary public at the doors of the theatre, on the bills of which La Pepita appeared in considerably augmented type.

It may not be generally known by the present generation that the libretto of Bellini’s fascinating opera *La Sonnambula* has been founded on a ballet, invented by the inexhaustible Eugène Scribe in

his earlier days. It was the ballet of *La Somnambule*, which had been revived for the purpose of exhibiting the qualities of La Pepita as pantomimic actress as well as *danseuse*. The preliminary *lever de rideau* was played to a listless and preoccupied audience. It was clear that the ballet was the great attraction of the evening. I scarcely need say that I shared the impatience of the public. My sole thought was, Had my informants been justified in their enthusiasm? Had I found my treasure? The ballet commenced. Presently there bounded on the stage one of the loveliest little brunettes I had ever seen. Her dark hair and flashing black eyes seemingly justified her Spanish name. The 'tremendous reception' bestowed on her—in which the public, for once in a while in a Parisian theatre, almost overpowered the noisy hard-handed *claque*—told me at once that La Pepita stood before me. I am long past the heyday of youth, and far beyond any attack of the disease called 'love at first sight'—a disease in the existence of which I had never much belief. But my heart beat, I own, and my breath came at spasmodic intervals, as I watched the movements of that trim, plump, I may say faultless, figure. Enraptured as I was by the appearance of the charming girl, I did not, however, allow my critical judgment to be swayed by the fascination. My first feeling, I must own, was one of disappointment. After her first bound on the stage, dazzling as a brilliant flash of light in the midst of darkness, La Pepita seemed to collapse into the veriest commonplace. Her steps lacked spirit and fire; her gestures were uncertain, almost unintelligent; her eye wandered round the house without meaning. I heaved a sigh. I had not yet found my treasure. Suddenly, however, her eye, which

had been fixed for an instant, brightened. A smile—a smile of love and life and joy—not the stereotyped grin of the *danseuse*—illuminated her face. A new fire then seemed to have animated her whole being. There were spirit, grace, archness, tenderness, nature, and truth in every movement, in every gesture, in every step. Once more, during the earlier portion of her impersonation, she gave me another thrill of fear. All at once she faltered. I could almost fancy she grew pale. Her art seemed to fail her. But then, again, another smile crossed her lips—but so different from the first! It was more the smile of scorn and defiance. She quickly rallied; and never again, during the whole performance, did she waver for one moment.

It is needless for me to follow La Pepita in memory through the ballet. I am not ashamed to say that, during one scene in which she mimed the despair and bewilderment of the innocent girl, thrust aside by her deluded lover, and accused by all, I felt tears welling into my old eyes, albeit unused to the 'melting mood,' and long since disillusioned by 'behind-the-scenes' realities. Familiar as the incidents of the story were to me, moreover, I could not shake off an unwonted tremor of excitement, almost of breathless fear, as the actress, in her last sleep-walking scene, crossed, from her attic window, over the dangerous whirling mill-wheel. In order to increase the thrilling interest of this scene, probably, the plank over which she walked had been placed at the utmost possible height, capable of due effect, above the stage. I was an old hand at this work. I knew that there was no danger—that the plank was supported by a rope from above, artfully arranged so as to be invisible to the audience; that La

Pepita was guiding herself by an equally invisible stout wire hand-rail. I knew all this. And yet, when the plank cracked and partially gave way, in the usual manner, my heart seemed to stand still; a scream nearly left my lips; I very nearly, in fact, made as much a fool of myself as many of the audience did. I laughed at myself quietly, although I was yet mastered by my emotion. Little did I think, as I thus laughed, that in so short a time—What am I about? Am I so ignorant of my craft that I would forestall? Well, well! I will go on as best I may.

I left the theatre with but one conviction in my mind—I *had* found my treasure. But should I ever be able to induce La Pepita to accept an engagement? I did not doubt that, if I could succeed, she would be a fortune to me. I could already count my receipts; and if I knew my public right, they would be enormous. It was an agitating doubt; and I slept as little that night as an ardent young lover about to 'pop the question' on the morrow. On making the due inquiries from a theatrical friend, intimate in La Pepita's theatre, I learned from him not only her address, but several particulars of her history. La Pepita was of no Spanish origin after all. She was simply a French girl—a Breton by birth. Her name was Françoise Chapelle. It was the peculiar southern tints of her bright face which had probably suggested the Spanish *nom de théâtre* afterwards bestowed upon her. She had been an orphan from her tenderest years, and had been left to the care of an uncle, a small pettifogging shopkeeper. Whilst still a mere child, she had attracted the attention of a wandering acrobat—for he seems to have been no more, spite his pompous title of *Professeur de Chorégraphie*—by her

sprightly manners, her vivacity, her powers of mimicry, and the suppleness of her lithe limbs. A bargain was soon struck with the grasping uncle. The girl was apprenticed to the stroller for a term of years, on the simple agreement that, during this period, he was to derive all the profits likely to arise from the exhibition of her talents. The bargain was by no means an uncommon one. The child herself was, in all probability, nothing loth. She must have detested the mean household of her guardian, who half starved her; and the wandering life had doubtless attractions for the little being, in whom artistic feelings were inborn. But still the whole transaction was a matter of mere sordid barter; and the child was sold. With her acrobat master the little Françoise travelled through Spain and Italy, growing in attractiveness, profiting by her early instruction, maturing in talent, and developing a real genius for her art, which even her far-sighted purchaser had not anticipated. Her *début* in pantomime on the Italian stage excited a veritable *furor* even from the first. The acrobat was probably no very harsh master; but Françoise—now La Pepita—appears, from all that had been allowed to transpire, to have loathed and dreaded him; although the reasons for her hatred could only have been a matter of conjecture and surmise. The fortunate speculator in youthful talent was known to have amassed a considerable fortune—considerable, at least, for such a man—by the adroit manner in which he had 'farmed' the talents of the young artist; and when the term of the apprenticeship was on the point of terminating, he had made strenuous efforts to continue his lease, on terms apparently advantageous to herself. But his offers—and it was said that he made others also—

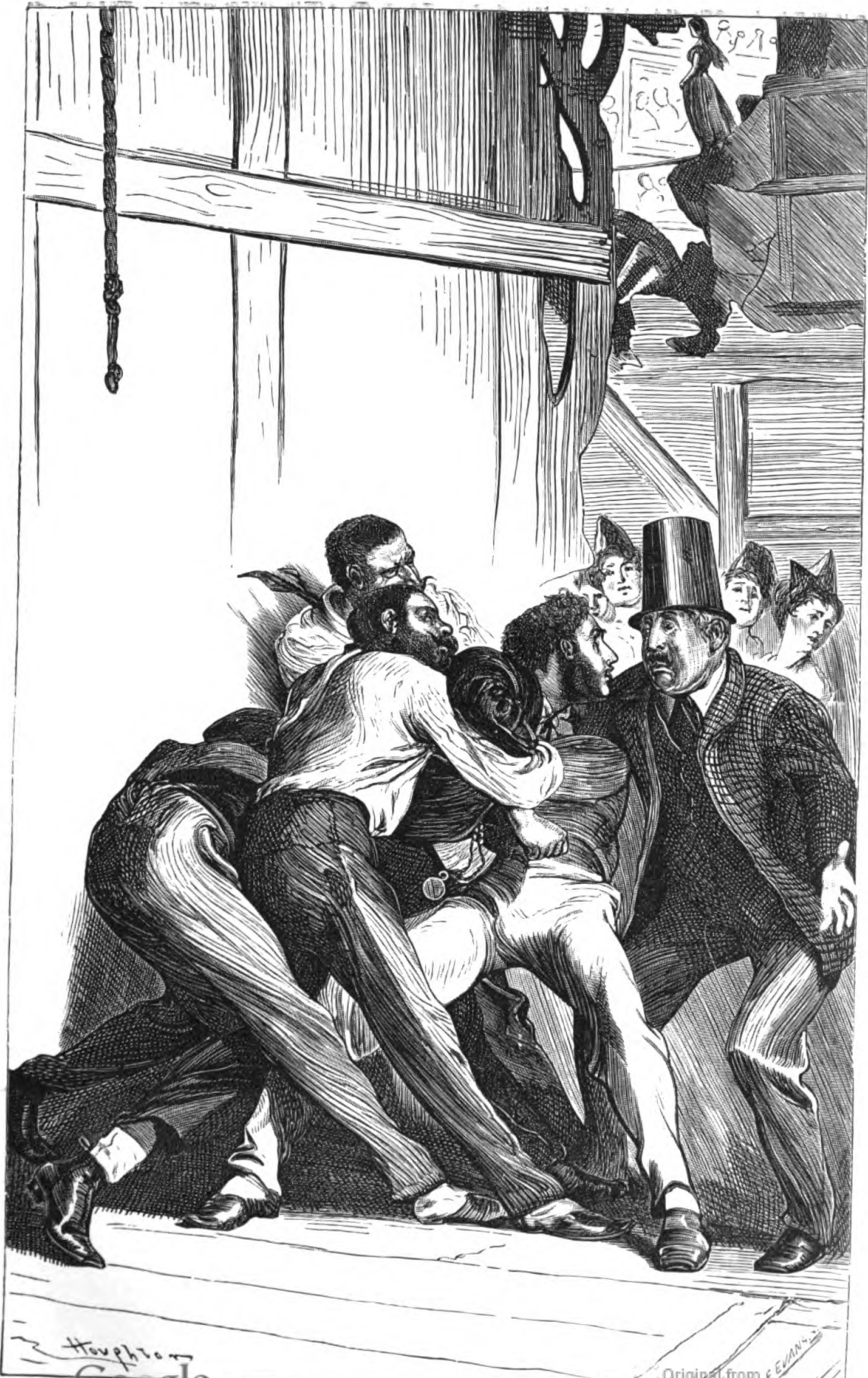
were angrily refused by La Pepita. She was now of age—her own mistress—alone and free to deal for herself. I had nothing to do but to address myself to the attractive *danseuse*, with my offer of an engagement, as an ordinary business transaction.

My first scene is now laid in the apartment of the dancer. *Dramatis personæ*, La Pepita and myself. The scene may be considered as what the French call the 'exposition' of my drama. The *salon* in which we are seated is a handsome one, but bright without being brilliant, and totally void of the meretricious ornaments and pseudo-artistic affectations in which most of the leading ladies of the ballet are wont to delectate themselves. I have said 'in which we are seated;' but this is an error; for La Pepita never retains her seat for half a minute. She is always starting up, to pace the room and play with the tassels of her dress, with a peculiar air of restlessness. Her manner is simple, straightforward, candid, and, if so young a lady could possibly possess such an air, business-like. Her smile is fascinating, and obviously genuine. She was flattered by my offer, she said—much flattered. She should like to visit England, of all things. She had a kindly feeling towards the English, for she believed in them. Yes, she believed in them, although she knew the feeling was rare among her country people. My offer was liberal, certainly; but—but—she did not wish to leave Paris at present. This was said with a half-sigh and a half-smile. It was evident that La Pepita had some *arrière pensée*. I don't know whether managerial habits deaden one to a better appreciation of human nature. Mine did, certainly, on this occasion. I had had so many dealings with the false and shift of the race. I fancied that her *arrière pensée* was

an assumption to lure me on to greater offers. The prize was a desirable one; and I blurted out my ultimatum, which was a considerable increase on my former advance. She turned on me quickly, with a blush which had almost an angry tint about it.

'Your first offer was already a noble one,' she said. 'I can only repeat that my sole reason for declining it arose from my unwillingness to leave Paris as yet.'

I was about to withdraw, and was still pouring forth my common-places about the honour of making her acquaintance, the hopes that, on some future occasion etcetera, totally regardless of a heavy knock at the *porte-cochère* below, and the evident preoccupation of La Pepita, when a young man abruptly entered the room. From the eager manner in which he advanced towards La Pepita, and from the heightened colour of her cheek, there could be no doubt on my mind as to the position of the two personages. It was evidently a love-affair, and just as evident—what a dunder-headed old fool I must have been not to have divined at once—that the motive for La Pepita's reluctance to quit Paris 'as yet' stood before me in the animated shape of that handsome young fellow. The young man turned quickly to regard me with a mingled air of curiosity and inquiry. La Pepita hastened to explain the reasons of my presence in her room, and at once introduced the gentleman as 'her friend, her very dear friend, Monsieur Eugène Delessert, dramatic author.' His name was familiar to me; and I ought to have blushed, if I did not—which, I own, was an unlikely occurrence—when I reflected on sundry little thefts which had been perpetrated in 'perfid Albion' on this clever rising young dramatist. I believe I expressed something like a little remorse on this head,



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THE MANAGER'S STORY.

Original from EVAN'S  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA



in the name of my compatriots ; for he laughed, and grasped my hand cordially, and said, with a polite air, that he was much indebted to us for the honour we had done him, and — and — somehow we seemed to have become friends on the spot. After a little chat, however, I grew mindful of the proverb beginning 'Two are company;' and I once more prepared to take my leave. My hand was on the door, when it was roughly opened; and I was thrust back with some degree of violence. Another gentleman entered the room even more abruptly than the former. Did I say 'gentleman'? Well, let the expression pass now. At all events, he had little the air or manner of a gentleman. He was a fine fellow, however—that is to say, a handsome fellow—although some years past forty, and 'fine' as far as outrageously fine clothes, and gorgeous chains, and brilliant studs, and a very swaggering air would make him. La Pepita had started painfully on his entrance.

'You did not expect me, of course,' he said in a sarcastic tone.

'I was aware you had returned; I saw you in the theatre last night,' she replied, with a cold and indifferent air.

She advanced, however, to meet him with an extended hand—an action which the fellow evidently affected not to see.

'Don't go, sir,' said La Pepita hurriedly to me; and as I still hesitated, she added with evident eagerness, 'I do entreat you not to go.'

It was very evident that she feared some collision, were the other *dramatis personæ* to remain without the restraining presence of a fourth. I bowed and resumed my seat. 'Monsieur Achille Touffard,' said La Pepita, with a slight air of introduction. I bowed again; my back, however, felt peculiarly stiff as I did so. The conviction

flashed across my mind that it was the acrobat and ex-master whom I saw. Monsieur Achille Touffard seemed considerably annoyed; and the more I saw the frown gathering on his brow, and the angry irritation of his manner, which no decent feeling could restrain, the more I determined to remain glued to my seat. La Pepita evidently thanked me for my obstinacy with one of her sweet looks.

'I want to speak to you, François,' said Monsieur Touffard, at last, sullenly.

La Pepita bowed, as if ready to hear him.

'Urgently and alone,' he added.

She excused herself on the score of company and business transactions with me.

'You won't?' blurted out the angry man.

'I cannot,' was the reply.

He paced the room for a few moments, then faced the trembling girl abruptly.

'No matter!' he said; 'a few words will suffice me now. Once for all, is it yes or no?'

'No,' said La Pepita firmly.

'For ever no?'

'For ever no.'

The fellow laughed.

'You forget that I have revenge still in my power,' he said, and glared at Eugène Delessert.

The young author sprang to his feet. Angry words were evidently on his lips; but a gesture from La Pepita silenced him. He sat down pale and quivering with passion.

'After that threat to a woman, sir,' said La Pepita to the sullen Achille, 'I cannot ask you to remain. Excuse me;' and she pointed to the door.

'I have said it, and I mean it,' was the only reply of the angry man; and he flung himself out of the room, banging to the door behind him. Eugène Delessert had again sprung to his feet, as if



about to follow. Again La Pepita restrained him.

'Do nothing, I implore you, Eugène,' she said. 'Do not heed him. I do not. He cannot harm us.'

The young man stood irresolute. She held forth both her hands with such a loving smile—the fascinating jade!—who could resist her? I really don't know how I left the room. But I am pretty sure that I was not well out of the door before the young fellow had hugged her to his heart. If he didn't, he ought to have done; that's all I can say.

My first scene is ended. My dramatic instincts easily supplied me with the missing links in the construction of the plot. Monsieur Eugène Delessert, the lucky dog! was the accepted lover, the future husband of La Pepita. Monsieur Achille Touffard, the ex-acrobat, wanted to marry the girl himself—whether love or speculation had the most to do with the matter, of course I could not tell—was jealous and revengeful. I knew he meant to be revengeful. I did not at all like that very nasty tone with which he hissed out that word 'revenge.' I now felt convinced that it was her lover whom La Pepita had sought among the crowd of spectators at the commencement of her performance on the previous night; that it was the sight of his loving face that had restored her animation; and that the discovery of Monsieur Touffard, of whose presence she was not aware, had caused her agitation afterwards, and that painful smile. I could not be far wrong in this surmise, I am convinced.

I must now shift my scene. The change again represents the apartment of a *danseuse* similar and yet how different from Scene 1! Ormolu tables, gorgeous clocks, Dresden china ornaments, bronzes, and Venetian glasses—every possible style of ornament, however absurdly fan-

tastic, was employed in the superb decoration. But the genius of disorder and incongruity reigned paramount over all. Taste had hidden its poor head away under the broker-like stores of miscellaneous finery. My hopes of engaging the fascinating Pepita, at all events for my coming season, were at an end. My efforts to resign myself to their destruction were sorry and futile. But, after all, if a manager is not something of a philosopher, why, for many reasons, he had better not be a manager at all. So I had made a shabby attempt to bear my disappointment on philosophical principles. In the ballet of *La Somnambule*, La Pepita 'had been supported,' as the theatrical phrase goes, by a young *danseuse*, who was not without considerable merit as well as beauty. Mademoiselle Camille had mimed the part of the envious and spiteful Lisa with unusual spirit and truth. Her air of triumph when she carried off the lover of her rival had been splendid. If La Pepita failed me, I might make 'a card,' I thought, of Mademoiselle Camille—no such winning card, alas!—no ace of trumps, but a card to play. I am now 'making ante-chamber,' as the French have it, in the apartment of Mademoiselle Camille. I have been told that the *danseuse* was particularly engaged, and that I must wait. I had waited. I had waited very long. I was not accustomed to wait; and my managerial bile was rising very fast. I had heard the murmur of voices from the neighbouring room. The conversation seemed likely to last until 'the crack of doom.' I was about to go my ways and leave my card and address with the *soubrette*, when suddenly the voices became louder, as if the interchangers of the muttered confidences had risen and were approaching the door. One voice was that of a man. I had surely heard it before. Yes! There could be no

doubt. Those were the rough tones of Monsieur Achille Touffard. I retreated. But unless I had put my fingers in my ears, it would have been impossible to have avoided overhearing many of the broken sentences. The ex-acrobat was evidently expostulating, and in a manner which smacked at the same time of contempt and impatience. 'I thought you a woman of spirit, Camille,' said Monsieur Touffard. 'You are no better than a weak wavering fool.' Low murmurs from the *danseuse* followed. 'I maintain what I said,' went on the man aloud. 'Here's this girl has snatched your lover from you, wheedled him into her snares—the artful treacherous hussy; and now you go whining on, giving way to your silly scruples and fancies, with all the requisite will, but none of the requisite daring.' The fellow was unconsciously parodying Shakespeare: I owed him another grudge for that. The *danseuse* continued to whine in a tone of remonstrance. 'Tears!' laughed the ex-acrobat, with scorn. 'Crocodile's tears! You can pump them up at will—you know you can. Come! use your pocket-handkerchief, and listen to reason. That young idiot of a *machiniste*, Michel Poulain, is as spoony on you as any such low vermin can be, the fool!' 'I don't know that he's a fool for that; though, of course, I can't think of a low fellow like young Poulain. He can't help it, I suppose, poor fellow!' It was Mademoiselle Camille who spoke in an excited tone. 'Well, then, what have you to do but to smile and simper, and say a few soft words to the enamoured donkey, and back your lures with a few Napoleons, if necessary? and the trick is done! Nobody will be the wiser. Who is ever to know the truth?' And the fellow laughed again. 'I can't, I can't!' sobbed the *danseuse*. She was evidently again retreating to the farther end of the room. Mon-

sieur Touffard must have followed her; for the voices were now once more low and wholly indistinct. I don't know what instinct it was, by which the conversation I had involuntarily overheard fascinated me. The matter was wholly unintelligible to me; and yet it thrilled me with a strange fear and an unaccountable interest. Doubtless you will all think me an old fool. Perhaps I was; but I could not help it. I shook off the feeling, however, and was again about to take my departure, when once more the voices became louder.

'It is decided, then. It will be done!' said Monsieur Touffard. A pause. 'All right!' continued the fellow. 'Your hand on it.' A moment afterwards, the ex-acrobat raised the thick curtains of the *portière* and entered the room. I wished to avoid him, and had just time to seat myself and lean my head on my hand. The fellow paused for a moment; I felt that he was looking at me suspiciously. Directly afterwards I heard him close the door. He was gone. Presently came the trim handmaiden of the *danseuse*, to tell me that her mistress would see me now. I entered her *boudoir*. Mademoiselle Camille was still agitated; and there were traces of real tears in her eyes. She received me, however, with considerable self-possession. It is needless now to enter into all the details of my business interview. Suffice it to say, I again experienced a failure. The terms I offered were laughed to scorn by the grasping *danseuse*. Her ultimatum far exceeded the highest salary I had offered La Pepita. I expressed my regrets to Mademoiselle Camille that English managers were not possessed of such gold-mines as her talent deserved—bowed, and left her. I felt very low, as I turned out of the Rue Lafitte, on the Boulevard. It was a bright, cheery,

and even warm day for the early part of December. The aspect of all around me—of the glittering shops, of the pleasure-seeking crowds—was gay, lively, and exhilarating. Why, then, did I feel so low? I am certain it was not my last disappointment which had oppressed my spirits. The loss of La Pepita was certainly a great one: but—La Pepita! My mind involuntarily connected her with the strange conversation I had overheard. That man Touffard had declared himself her enemy. But if his words referred in any way to her, what could they mean? I was lost in conjecture. After a time, I reasoned myself into the conviction that I was a romantic old idiot to entertain such fancies. I strove to drive the subject from my mind. I succeeded only partially. It tormented me again in my dreams. To be sure I had made a remarkably good dinner to cheer up my flagging spirits; and that fact may, in some degree, account for my nightmare.

A whistle from my good prompter, Memory—and the scene is once more changed. It represents a wine-shop now—one of those tolerably grimy little *cabarets* frequented by the artisans of Paris. Do you believe in fatalities? I do. I don't know whether I always did; but I do now. Call me superstitious, if you will—laugh at me—mock me; but I shall not flinch. I am convinced it was a fatality which made me enter that pot-house. To be sure, I was faint and weary, from a long, useless, tramp in search of the domicile of a third *danseuse*, who had flitted so often from one abode to another, and in the last case in so mysterious a fashion, that I was obliged to give up the chase in despair. It was already dark. The night had set in; I was far from my usual haunts; and some restorative was necessary.

You may laugh, and say it was only thirst which drove me into that wine-shop. I maintain it was fatality. I had taken a *canon*, as they call it, at the much-be-smeared counter; and I sat myself down on a chair in a dark corner from sheer weariness. So fatigued was I, that I fancy I was nodding myself asleep, when I was roused by a loud voice. At a table sat two young men, apparently of that class of Parisian artisan most likely to frequent the establishment.

Thus far there was nothing to excite my attention in any way. It was a harsh discordant laugh from one of them that had aroused me from my drowsiness. The laugh was so prolonged, so strange, so hysterical, that it caused me to fix my eyes on the noisy man. He was a good-looking young fellow—I should have thought a carpenter by trade—and evidently already in a far advanced stage of inebriation.

'You must be mad,' said his companion—'you must be mad, Michel, to neglect your service in this manner. You will be discharged—lose your salary. For God's sake, rouse yourself—get up, and be off to the theatre at once. You will escape with a fine.'

'Curse the theatre!' shouted the excited Michel. 'Curse the salary—curse them all!—all but one—that beautiful she-devil—that lovely temptress—no, I can't curse her. Yet, perhaps, she deserves my curses most!' And he flung his head down on the table on his extended arms with a sort of groan.

'What do you mean? Is it the drink makes you mad?'

'Mad!—mad, did you say?' cried Michel, raising his head again. 'Yes, perhaps I am mad, perhaps I wish I were.'

'Michel Poulain, Michel Poulain, be a man, my good fellow!

Come, shake off this folly, and go at once to the theatre.'

Michel Poulain! Surely I had heard that name before. But where? The companion had dragged the intoxicated *machiniste* of the theatre—for such he now appeared to be—from his seat, and supported him until he stood. Michel made a few steps towards the door of the wine-shop, then extricated himself with violence from the grasp of his friend, staggered back to the table, and again flung himself down.

'No, no,' he groaned, 'I can't go back to the theatre—I can't! Would I could never put my foot within those accursed walls again! Leave me alone! I can't go—I won't go! Would you drag me there to see it done? I could not see it—it would kill me!'

'See what?' said the other; and he began to look around him somewhat anxiously. The mistress of the *cabaret* was knitting unconcernedly. She was accustomed, probably, to noisy scenes, and paid no heed to him. I looked half asleep in my dark corner.

'See what?' repeated Michel's friend, vainly trying to hold back the arm of the excited young *machiniste* as he proceeded to pour more of the fiery drink down his parched throat.

'See what!' shouted the drunken fellow, who had evidently now quite lost his reason. 'That mangled corpse—that beautiful mangled corpse.'

The companion shook his head with a pitying air. He obviously thought his friend was really maddened by the drink.

'How could I stand by and see it all?' continued Michel. 'Twas my deed, I know. She tempted me with her smiles, and her sweet words, and her promises to be mine—mine, do you hear? that glorious creature!—if I would do it. It was but one cut of my knife. It was easily done. No one was

by; no one saw me do it. But I can't look on. I can't—I won't!'

'He is raving. The cold night air will do him good!' said the friend to the mistress of the wine-shop, who, however, still knitted on unheeding; the liquor had been paid for. 'Come; there is still time!' he again remonstrated.

'Time! time! Yes; it is about the time! What's o'clock? Yes, it is near the time,' he continued, unheeding the answer as to the hour. 'She will now come out, with those great, black, staring eyes! Yes! look! her foot is on the plank! The rope hangs together only by a thread! Another moment, and all is over—all!'

With a fearful scream, Michel Poulain, who had staggered to his feet, with strained eyeballs and extended arms, fell a senseless lump on the ground.

Little by little, during this scene, a series of links of evidence had been connecting themselves in my mind, until, all at once, a terrible conviction assumed the form of reality. What a reality! All appeared clear to me now. At the instigation of that miscreant the revengeful acrobat, the no less guilty woman the *danseuse* Camille, in order to avenge a slight of love, and to rid herself of the object of her envy and hate, had induced her foolish, mad admirer, the *machiniste* Michel Poulain, to work a mortal injury on her rival. La Pepita—the lovely Pepita—was to be the victim of this infernal plot. Yes; it was all clear. That mad wretch had spoken of a rope cut—the heavy rope, no doubt, which formed the support of the dangerous plank above the mill-wheel. At that very moment La Pepita might be stepping to her death. My brain was in a whirl. What should I do? I stood for a few moments grasping the back of my chair. My first impulse was to fly at the senseless brute before me.

To what good? I could easily find the wretch again. Yes; I would rush to the theatre. I might yet be in time to prevent the terrible catastrophe. Please God, I might yet be in time. I rushed out of the wine-shop in a state bordering on distraction. The night was dark. I hardly knew my whereabouts in those narrow streets. My brain would render me no assistance for a time. I was embarrassed which way to turn. I strove to collect my senses. By a strong mastery of my will, I regained something like self-possession. I recalled the portion of the French capital in which I must be—the direction which I must take to reach the theatre. To have hailed one of the snail-crawling hack vehicles of Paris would have been sheer folly. I rushed in the direction of the boulevards like a madman, thrusting rudely aside the dawdling passengers who ventured to impede my progress—more than once nearly defeating my purpose by incurring a quarrel with an angry man or a no less irate specimen of the female sex. But I still ran on. I don't know how I had the breath to do it. I am by no means in training for a rapid race, as you may well imagine. It seemed by some instinct—some prodigy—rather than by any process of reasoning, that I reached the theatre. My brain reeled with a feeling of suffocation. I turned down a narrow street—another at the back of the theatre. I was at the stage-door. I rushed blindly in, and attempted to stagger up the stairs before me; but I was stopped by the janitor of the theatre and his wife. Who was I? What did I want? I must have uttered some incoherent words about death and destruction—the plank—La Pepita. I don't know what I said. The guardians of the door evidently thought me mad, or drunk, or both. A struggle ensued; and I

must admit the poor folks had every reason for their opposition. Someone rushed downstairs. The same questions—What did I want? What was the meaning of this outrageous proceeding? ‘I come to save La Pepita from death!’ I shrieked. I only added another impediment to my progress. Once more I fought for the mastery of myself—strove to collect a little sense and reason. I declared my name and qualities. The people were civil enough. They would take my card to the manager, they said. ‘But it may be too late!—it may be too late!’ This was all I could utter. Perhaps at that very moment the horrible catastrophe might be taking place; and I—I—could do nothing. At this moment another individual entered the stage-door. Thank Heaven! it was the very friend, connected with the theatre, of whom I have already spoken. I don't know what he thought. Probably his idea of me was the same as that of the others. But he gave his guarantee for me to the *concierge*, and hurried me up the stairs. He began to feel, from my excited words, that, at all events, there was method in my madness. As we rushed on, I stammered out my story as coherently as my distracted brain and panting breath would permit.

My scene is changed again. We are now behind the scenes of the theatre. I see a vision of posts, ladders, ropes, and pieces of scenery. I can perceive, with a glance, that all the personages are on the stage for the final scene. ‘Where is La Pepita? She must not go on! Save her!’ I cried frantically. I rushed towards the portion of the stage where I knew she must be standing on high, ready to emerge from her window and cross the fatal plank. I was immediately in the grasp of half-a-dozen carpenters, who were pulling me back with

violence. I strove to reach the stage, shouting, 'Stop her! stop her! don't let her come on!' There was a commotion—a murmur—but I heeded nothing. I struggled still more, but struggled in vain. My friend was endeavouring to interfere for my protection. 'Do you save her!' I screamed to him. He scarcely understood me; but he ran round behind. Would he be in time to save her yet? To my horror I saw La Pepita appear at the window. He had been too late to stop her. I screamed aloud to her, still struggling with my assailants. My mouth was stopped—gagged. As I was being dragged back against the wall, I saw her step on the plank, assured and calm and smiling, as if in placid sleep—advance, with her hand on the wire rail. A crack—a crash—a fearful scream—a simultaneous cry of horror from hundreds of yelling voices, were all I heard; the broken plank, her falling body, were all I saw. My senses failed me then. I had sunk down in a fit.

When I came to myself, I was lying in my own bed in my hotel. I felt a strange faintness and weariness, and a sort of numbness on my brain. My first impression was that I had awaked from a very horrible dream, and that I was very glad to be so. As I attempted to raise myself up I felt a certain degree of pain. To my surprise, one of my arms was bandaged. There was a step in my room as I moved; and a man advanced to my bedside. It was my friend from the theatre. 'What is all this?' I said, somewhat confusedly. 'A trifle,' he answered with a smile. 'You have only been bled; you are better now: here, take this. The medical man has left it for you.' And he held out a potion to me. 'Bled! what for?' Suddenly the past scene of horror darted vividly across my brain.

I uttered a low moan, and nearly lost consciousness once more. My friend supported me. 'Poor thing! poor thing!' I murmured. 'Dead! dead! So young—so beautiful—so talented!' 'Hush! hush! be calm,' said my male nurse. 'Don't excite yourself—she is not dead.' 'How? how?' I stammered, endeavouring to sit up. All entreaties to be patient and compose myself were vain. I would hear all at once. In falling, La Pepita had unconsciously, and with an instinctive convulsive effort to save herself, twisted the stout wire, forming the invisible rail, around her wrist. The wire had swagged, bent beneath her weight as she fell, but slowly. Before it had given way at one end, a hundred arms had been stretched forth to break her fall. Some of the gallant fellows of the ballet—for there is pluck even in male dancers—had been injured by her fall. But La Pepita had escaped with her life. She had been but little bruised. Her wrist had been much cut and mangled, and her shoulder dislocated—*voilà tout*. Her life had been spared—thank Heaven for that mercy! The last phrase was my own, as I sank back on my bed, and swallowed my composing draught.

The performance is over now. But perhaps I need make no apology for troubling you with an epilogue as well as a prologue to this little drama of real life. My first effort, as soon as I was fairly on my legs again, was to betake myself to the domicile of La Pepita with inquiries. Monsieur Eugène Delessert received me. He was pale and worn with watching, but overwhelming in his professions of friendship and affection. The tears started into his eyes as he spoke of his beloved and the horrible danger which had menaced her. She was slowly recovering, he said. The dislocation had been easily

repaired; the mangled wrist only needed time to heal. The shock to her system by the fearful accident had been the danger with which the medical men had been forced to combat; but that danger was past now. La Pepita, on her recovery, would retire from the stage, for some time at least; and, besides, there was the holiday of their honeymoon to look forward to. After congratulations and protestations on both sides, there was still much to say. My story had still to be told to the lover; though circumstances had already occurred which had led him to divine the greater portion of it. An official examination of the cord which had given way speedily revealed the reason of the accident. The ravings of the half-maddened and conscience-stricken Michel Poulain had betrayed the foul plot. Mademoiselle Camille, who had rushed from the stage at the moment of the

accident, and her wretched accomplice, had both quitted Paris, it was supposed together; but justice and the telegraph were on their track.

I had the happiness of seeing La Pepita again. The roses were returning to her cheeks; but the hysterical sobs with which she embraced me—of course she embraced me—you need not titter—it was quite the right thing for her to do—her hysterical state, I say, showed how much her nervous system was still shattered. She shook her head with a saddened air as I talked of her return to the stage. But I feel assured that Madame Eugène Delessert will reappear, although in all probability she will never be tempted to act *La Somnambule* again; and I trust that one of these days, ladies and gentlemen, you will come and applaud that glorious creature, La Pepita, at my theatre.

The gentleman in the fur-coat had scarcely come to an end, and had received—we hardly knew why we gave it—a round of applause, when a porter put his head into the room, and called out, '*Les voyageurs pour Douvres!*' At the first sound we rose *en masse*, and rushed off to the pier, where the boat, her funnels roaring and smoking in the gray dawn, lay ready for us. The wind was still fresh, though the snow had ceased, and our passage was a far better one than we had anticipated. On landing, we found a bright sun and a sharp clear frosty day. Just before we got into the train, awaiting us at the pier, we shook hands all round, and wished each other 'Merry Christmas!'—and I noticed that the Manager in the fur-coat took the poor Frenchwoman on one side and pressed a little something into her hand, and kissed her on each cheek, and then rushed into the carriage, apparently waving off her thanks.

Madame Lindo is established in England now, principal of the St. Augustine College for Young Ladies, Regent's Park, where you who have daughters cannot do better than send them. She and a Person are great friends, and constantly, when I see them together, I am reminded of the time when Kamphausen's Englander went across to Calais, and was detained there—STORM-BOUND.



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